TRAVELLER

MERCENARY BOOK 1: MERCENARIES IN THE FAR FUTURE

SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURE IN THE FAR FUTURE

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	2
WARFARE IN 5-DIMENSIONAL BATTLESPACE	4
KEY CONCEPTS	12
TRAVELLERS IN A MERCENARY CAMPAIGN	19
RUNNING A MERCENARY CAMPAIGN	27
TICKETS	38
FORCE CAPABILITY ASSESSMENT	49
UNIT CHARACTERISTICS	55
FORCE CAPABILITY RECORD	64
MISSION AND OPERATION RESOLUTION	65
RESOLVING COMBAT	73
TACTICS	82
ENVIRONMENT	87
DETAILED RESOLUTION	91

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Printed in China.

MONGOOSE PUBLISHING

T R A V E L L E R

INTRODUCTION

The word 'mercenary' has unpleasant connotations for many but, in reality, mercenaries vary as much as any other group. A mercenary, correctly defined, is a military professional who serves a paymaster that is not their home government. Corporate security forces are, by definition, mercenaries as are members of a task force raised by a multi-government consortium to protect aid workers. These are honourable professions and mercenaries often outperform those who serve out of obligation to a government.

Despite this, mercenaries are often portrayed as being only interested in money and of dubious reliability. This is true of some, however mercenaries are in business like anyone else. A reputation for good service in difficult circumstances allows a unit to command a higher fee next time around. Mercenaries are thus fighting for themselves even when they are fighting for an employer and may choose to serve a bad master well for the sake of their reputation – a reputation that is as important as a commercial asset.

Mercenaries are often misused or mistreated by their employers. Some treat their hired solders as expendable cannon fodder or inferior to 'loyal citizens of the homeland' or 'warriors or the cause'. This is a common reason for mercenary disaffection, which leads to underperformance and sometimes even mutiny. On the other hand, mercenaries are not usually involved in the local political situation and may be more reliable than local troops. Those that think they can subvert a mercenary force by making a higher offer come up against the twin barriers of professionalism and regard for future contracts. Only the most desperate would hire a mercenary unit with a reputation for changing sides at the drop of a cheque.

The relationship between mercenaries and their patron can be a complex balancing act for both. The mercenaries have their unit's reputation to consider but will also be aware that they may be considered expendable. The patron must treat the mercenaries fairly if they are to remain loyal but may face criticism from their own forces for 'favouritism' towards outsiders.

For the ordinary soldier, the world of the mercenary can be quite simple; long periods of being available to do what the employer wants, some training and the occasional actual fight. Some missions are a bit tense but more or less safe, some become horrifyingly dangerous without warning. Much more time is spent standing ready than actually fighting and what happens above the mercenary's pay grade can usually be ignored.

Those who lead and command mercenary formations live in a far more complicated world. They may have to take part in the fighting but, for the most part, their job is to balance the requirements of the employer with what they have actually paid for, to ensure the force is capable of carrying out its mission and that there are no unpleasant surprises. More than one client has come up with the clever idea that if the mercenaries were to somehow be eliminated before the end of their contract they would not have to be paid. Most would not go this far but might be willing to use creatively interpreted contract clauses to wriggle out of part of a payment. The money is (usually) good but it is hard earned no matter whether the unit fights or not.

This book details how mercenary forces operate and fight across a range of environments and Tech Levels, along with rules on how to resolve missions and related incidents in the life of mercenaries. Additional rules deal with larger-scale conflicts and how the focus can shift from a high-level picture of a theatre of war to a crisis point involving a handful of mercenaries. In short, this volume is all about what an existing mercenary unit does. For information on how to raise and train a mercenary force, see *Book 2: Running a Mercenary Unit.*

C H A P T E R - O N E

WARFARE IN 5-DIMENSIONAL BATTLESPACE

For the mercenary of the far future, warfare rarely takes place on a battlefield in the conventional sense. True, any engagement will have immediate surroundings that can be considered a battlefield, or 'battle area', and this space has the usual three dimensions of length, breadth and height. In very simple terms, a threat or target will be a certain distance away, possibly at a different elevation. In low-tech societies or when fighting the forces of one, a mercenary might not have to think about much else. However, this is rarely the case.

The 'fourth dimension' of the modern battlespace is the electromagnetic spectrum and, in some cases, the possibility of psionic abilities in the combat area. A mercenary operating against an enemy that possesses even basic electronic devices may have to consider the possibility that friendly communications are being intercepted or that the enemy can obtain information by undetectable means. Conversely, disrupting the electronic and similar capabilities of the enemy can cause havoc in a force that depends upon them.

The 'fifth dimension' that must be considered is technology. Infantry are not always merely infantry, for example. Troops equipped with mid-tech small arms can massacre a low-tech army under the right conditions but the presence of a handful of personnel equipped with TL12 weapons might tip the balance back the other way. Likewise personal protection, transportation and communications technology can be powerful 'force multipliers' despite them do not directly increasing striking power.

Thus mercenaries (and other combat forces) operate in a complex battlespace where distance and elevation to the target are only part of the problem. A wise commander considers what advantages can be gained by manipulation of the electromagnetic spectrum and how available technology will affect the engagement. By way of example, if an enemy with no weapons more advanced than a musket is defending a hilltop, a direct assault using unarmoured grav vehicles could end the engagement in moments. If the same enemy has managed to obtain a few shoulder-fired anti-vehicle weapons, and a quick course in how to use them, the assault would be suicide. Assumptions about what the enemy can and cannot do are highly dangerous.

THE EFFECTS OF TECHNOLOGY

The availability of more advanced technology has a profound effect on warfare. Massed formations of infantry and cavalry, going at it with spear and lance, are a staple of large-scale conflict until reliable quick-firing firearms become available. However, if those weapons are available for Cr10000 a crate from the dodgy-looking free trader landed at the governmental palace, the game changes overnight. Militaries will obtain at least a few higher-technology weapons for their elite and will probably pick up cheap communications equipment too if they have any sense.

This is something the Referee must always keep in mind. 'Technological surprise' does sometimes occur, where a society has absolutely no idea that a weapon or capability exists. A handful of mercenaries carrying only handguns for self-defence and equipped with mid-tech radio equipment could completely alter the course of a low-mid tech battle or even an entire war, at land or at sea – and even more so if the enemy did not realise their opponents could communicate in real time over long distances. Likewise, the career of an alien Alexander or Napoleon could be cut short by a single marksman with a TL8 rifle.

Societies will adapt to the possibility of more advanced weapons as soon as they become aware of them. Low-tech does not translate to dumb and many of the solutions are obvious. Military formations will be more dispersed and strategy will adapt as well. Raiding, economic damage and harassment are viable strategies at any Tech Level, so low-tech societies might well adopt some form of special forces – and will obtain good weapons for them if at all possible. Asymmetric warfare will be the norm wherever technology intervenes and 'tech recon' of enemies is likely to be a standard procedure.

A team of mercenaries might arrive on a low-tech planet confident that they outgun entire nations, only to find there are serious opponents ready for them with mid-tech weaponry and a doctrine of raids and ambushes rather than marching obediently onto the mercenaries' gun muzzles.

However, there is a limit to how much offworld technology can be imported by any given state. The nature of war is generally dictated by logistics, personal firepower, long-range bombardment capability and communications, not necessarily in that order. Small-scale operations may involve offworld equipment, and a scattering of imported devices can make a profound difference, but overall the ability to make war in the conventional sense is limited by locally available technology.

TL0-2

Hand weapons dominate at very low Tech Levels, backed up by primitive projectile weaponry such as bows or crossbows. These should not be underestimated either in terms of range or accuracy but they are generally ineffective against advanced body armour or vehicles and enormously outranged by even basic mid-tech firearms. Communications technology is limited to visual signals, mechanically amplified noise and personal transmission of messages. Primitive long-range communications such as wire telegraphs might be in use in some TL2 societies. Logistics depend on water vessels and animal-drawn carts.

Hand-to-hand combat is decisive in such low-tech societies, with shock action delivered by infantry or cavalry equipped with hand weapons. Even at the upper end of the tech scale weapons such as the bayonet and the sword see regular use on the battlefield. Projectile weapons are a supporting system, rarely decisive on their own, and artillery is cumbersome in the extreme. Highly structured societies may be able to field massed

armies but smaller or loosely organised communities will typically rely on a small military elite backed up by poorly trained levies or militia at need. However, a segment of most low-tech societies will be highly effective with bows or primitive firearms, allowing the formation of hunter/sharpshooter units, which can still be effective even against forces employing advanced equipment.

The primary advantages mercenaries have in such an environment are communications and protection. Firepower is useful, as always, but a great deal can be achieved by a small force acting as a facilitator for local forces. Manoeuvres made by local opponents and allies will be slow and generally predictable, since forces must follow routes suitable for their pack animals. A small mercenary force could easily evade contact with significant local forces, especially if assisted by spotters with basic communications equipment. Fortifications capable of resisting local siege weapons are likely to be vulnerable to mid-tech shoulder-fired rockets – and so are enemy siege weapons. Even soft-skinned vehicles are largely immune to local weaponry and give a mercenary force the ability to evade contact or strike unexpectedly at a vulnerable point.

Large mercenary forces are unlikely to be hired for a conflict on such a world, since this represents unnecessary expenditure. A small team or unit up to company size is likely to be entirely sufficient for operations in this environment, although small forces are vulnerable to being overwhelmed if caught by local forces. Personal protection and small arms are entirely sufficient to inflict hugely disproportionate casualties on an enemy force, whilst longer ranged weapons may allow an enemy formation to be disrupted with impunity. A handful of marksmen can take out officers or suppress entry points to an installation, rendering the enemy impotent and perhaps forcing negotiations without inflicting heavy casualties. Likewise, anti-materiel weapons can disable enemy heavy weapons and even maritime vessels from far beyond the reach of any retaliation.

Overall, mercenaries working in a TL0-2 environment have enormous advantages over the local forces but should be aware that these can be offset inexpensively. A few rifles and personal communications sets will give the locals much the same advantages as offworld mercenaries would enjoy and they are unlikely to be foolish enough not to obtain them. Operations are likely to be on a small scale, in which there is a real possibility of encountering the local elite on near-equal terms – at least as far as equipment is concerned. Mercenaries worthy of their fee should still have advantages in terms of organisation, planning and a clearer understanding of what TL2+ equipment can do.

TL1 Warband

A group of Iron Age villagers have been sent to deal with a rumour of problems in a nearby area. They are led by a single professional warrior, who is equipped with a ringmail hauberk and a metal helm. The warrior is armed with a long cutting sword as a badge of rank but fights with spear and shield like those they lead. The other six members of the group are farmers and craftsmen, although some have seen action before. They are armed with spear and shield, mostly with a large knife or a hand-axe as a backup. Only one has armour; a leather jack reinforced with odd bits of metal. Two of the villagers have a smaller spear for throwing and one has a bow. This assumes no offworld weapons are present. It is possible the warrior might have obtained or been gifted with a firearm in which case they will use it with reasonable skill – although ammunition for practice will be in short supply.

This force will fight hand-to-hand, with bows and javelins employed on an individual basis as circumstances allow. Weapons handling is basic, other than the professional, but the warriors are capable of supporting one another and acting as a team at least some of the time. They fight in loose order, following the warrior's lead, and are likely to break and run if their leader is downed.

TL3-5

Once machinery and firearms are available locally, the situation changes for offworld mercenaries. Ground forces may still train to fight en masse against similarly equipped formations but the emphasis will tend to be on skirmishing and individuals or small units rather than neat ranks of close-order infantry. Sharpshooters will be available to local leaders, generally raised from hunters and similar groups with a tradition of marksmanship. Even at the lower end of the tech scale local forces will be less surprised at the mobility afforded by vehicles and may possess some of their own. Communications equipment of local manufacture may be available and leaders will be familiar enough with its capabilities to want more advanced units if they can be obtained.

TL3-5 forces will typically rely on animal power for mobility and logistics, although at the upper end of the tech scale motorised vehicles are likely to have completely supplanted animals. This is usually the case on developed, organised worlds whereas outback regions or worlds with a small industrial base may continue to

use animals for many purposes. Massed close-order formations are survivable against TL3 and early TL4 opponents and may exist in such societies. Greater individual firepower rapidly results in an 'empty battlefield' where small units operate cooperatively but separately and make extensive use of cover.

At TL5, locally produced armoured vehicles and aircraft begin to appear, allowing the beginnings of mobile warfare. Doctrine still tends to be dictated by logistics, with emphasis on defensive lines or zones and rail or water links essential to strategic mobility. Anti-air weapons tend to be light and inaccurate – grouped machineguns, light autocannon and high-velocity guns capable of high elevation. Likewise, anti-armour weapons are basic, taking the form of mines, anti-armour rifles, satchel charges and repurposed artillery or anti-aircraft guns.

At the lower end of the technological spectrum, contracts are likely to involve infantry-type mercenary units, perhaps with some support weapons or vehicles. Few clients are likely to hire grav armour to take on musket-armed infantry, even if they want a quick decision. This is an example of the cost to capability tradeoff, which regulates the mercenary marketplace – a force of grav tanks might get the job done quickly but there is still the cost of transporting it and meeting maintenance costs. A more lightly equipped force will suffice and cost far less.

One result of this factor is that infantry-type units (perhaps with the odd piece of grav armour) can find employment in a wider range of situations than heavier forces but may face opposition that can put up a surprisingly good fight. Clients will hire mercenaries because they give enough of an advantage to achieve their aims. They will not pay several times as much for a kerb-stomp by a grossly overpowered force. This means the mercenaries are unlikely to have an entirely easy ride, even on low-mid tech worlds.

At the higher end of this part of the tech spectrum the opposition may possess basic combat aircraft, effective armoured vehicles and armoured maritime warships. This is generally not so much of a concern to mercenaries as the converse – if such weapons are present on-planet the locals will have something capable of taking them on. The chances of a light grav vehicle being hit by a crude shoulder-fired rocket or anti-tank rifle are slim but the threat exists.

Similarly, from late TL4 and onward, military doctrine becomes 'modern', in the sense that effective armoured vehicles, aircraft, artillery and radio-frequency communications are all factored into doctrine and training. Local troops can be expected to be aware of likely threats and have some means to counter them, at least marginally. In some ways this can be turned to an advantage – local communications networks can be easily penetrated by higher-tech equipment and crude electronic systems may be susceptible to jamming or decoys. However, the converse is that almost every local soldier will possess a weapon capable of penetrating light body armour at a considerable distance and tactics will be geared towards the same sort of combat mercenaries train for.

TL4 Mounted Patrol

A detachment of troops from the local Mounted Rifles force has been sent out on patrol, expecting to be out for a week or more. The patrol consists of 12 troopers led by a sergeant. They are equipped with a TL4 single-shot breechloading carbine as a primary weapon, backed up by a revolver for mounted skirmishing. Each member of the patrol also has a sabre in a saddle scabbard but these are rarely drawn except on ceremonial occasions. Personal protection is limited to a metal helmet, although before action troopers will roll their cloaks and strap them in place over the shoulder and upper chest on the left side. This is a holdover from the days of mounted sabre combat but the command 'roll cloaks!' is still a clear indication that the unit means business.

These professional soldiers normally dismount to skirmish with carbines, with some of their number holding the horses at the rear for a rapid repositioning, pursuit or retreat. The force is quite capable of fighting from horseback with carbine and pistol, and individuals may even resort to their sabres. On foot or mounted, the patrol fights in loose skirmishing order, either using cover or mobility to avoid enemy fire. They are disciplined enough to fight on if their leader is downed but more likely to make a fighting retreat after recovering as many casualties as possible.

TL6-8

TL 6-8 societies are capable of fielding forces that can provide effective resistance to high-tech mercenaries, at least to some degree. Even without imported equipment, local anti-armour and aerospace defence capabilities pose a credible threat to lightly equipped mercenary forces. Guidance and communication systems are easy to jam or spoof, making locally-produced missiles at best marginally effective but their warheads are sufficient to destroy a light armoured vehicle of any Tech Level. Shoulder-fired unguided rockets can be fielded in vast numbers if required.

An organised TL6-8 nation or world government will usually be able to deploy combined-arms ground forces supported by air and maritime assets. It may also be able to pose a threat to spacecraft using missiles and may possess nuclear weapons. Less organised forces will still be able to pose a threat to mercenary units with small arms and light support weapons. The prevalence of civilian vehicles allows the creation of what are known as 'technicals' – typically pickup trucks or SUVs with a light support weapon mounted on the back. Although unarmoured, such vehicles provide mobile firepower at a low price and are used by insurgent forces everywhere.

Depending on the perceived threat, TL6-8 forces may be skewed towards an offworld threat rather than on-planet warfighting. Balkanised worlds typically have forces designed to fight those of other nations, whereas single-state worlds tend to be more concerned with dealing with insurgencies or offworld threats. These forces will emphasise light, mobile elements rather than heavy tanks and artillery, although these may still be present. Aerospace defence will receive a large share of the military budget and troops will be equipped to take on forces of a higher Tech Level. This typically means large numbers of unguided rocket weapons, anti-materiel rifles and similar systems emphasising at least marginal capability against troops with high-tech body armour or light vehicles constructed at higher Tech Levels and therefore better protected than locally available equivalents.

Mercenaries operating in such an environment are almost inevitably outnumbered and must rely on their ability to bring superior firepower to bear at the critical point. Technological assistance enables the mercenary force to outthink and out-manoeuvre their opponents, whilst individual firepower is sufficient to outgun forces capable of bringing the mercenaries to action.

TL7 Infantry Section

A world government has organised its forces to deal with offworld threats and the occasional insurgency. This eight-soldier infantry section is intended for defensive operations in urban terrain against forces likely to have better vehicles, weaponry and protection. It has no organic transport but will normally be provided with light vehicles or a truck, if necessary. The section is divided into two squads of four. The 'rifle' squad is led by a corporal; the 'support' squad by a junior sergeant who is the section leader. Personal protection consists of a bulky and uncomfortable flak jacket and a metal helmet.

Three soldiers in the rifle squad are armed with fully-automatic assault rifles. One carries a lighter 'carbine' version of the rifle and a reusable rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) launcher. This soldier is a designated grenadier who has displayed advanced skills but all are capable of using the launcher at need. Standard grenade loadout is one light anti-armour weapon posing a slight threat to a lightly armoured vehicle and one high-explosive/fragmentation grenade or one smoke grenade. This is carried by all four members of the squad.

Rather than a light automatic weapon the support squad centres on a 12mm anti-materiel rifle, of a type generally known as a 'crunch gun'. Usually firing armour-piercing or light explosive/incendiary ammunition this weapon can disable light vehicles with a lucky shot and poses a significant threat to combat armour or similar high-end personal protection. The gunner carries only a sidearm for self-defence but is assisted by a loader/spotter armed with the carbine version of the usual assault rifle. The section leader and one other infantryman are equipped the same as the riflemen but carry additional ammunition for the crunch gun instead of one of the RPG grenades.

This section is best suited to a low-mobility role, fighting defensively in urban terrain. Where combat against forces that do not have a technological advantage is expected the crunch gunner may be issued an assault rifle instead. The section is expected to function with limited initiative in a confused, cluttered combat environment. Its usual tactic is to find a position with good fields of fire and defend it, engaging enemy vehicles and armoured infantry as targets of preference.

TL9-10

TL9+ forces are likely to have grav vehicles available. These may be possessed by lower-tech forces as imports but until local facilities can produce spares, maintenance costs make it impractical to operate more than a handful. Grav vehicles revolutionise warfare, allowing rapid movement over most terrain and rendering many obstacles irrelevant. There is still a divide between ground combat assets and aerospace vehicles however; grav tanks can fly at any altitude but tend to hug the ground for protection.

Grav transport vastly enhances mobility in both the strategic and tactical sense. Strategically, logistics is more rapid and strikes can be launched almost anywhere. If the concept of mobility 'front lines' was challenged by aircraft and effective ground vehicles it is obliterated by grav transport. Instead, the theatre of war is defined by zones that can be effectively denied to enemy transport, zones where enemy transport can be challenged and zones where it can operate more or less with impunity. A fortified city or installation with good anti-aerospace and anti-armour defences becomes a safe zone for friendly forces but the area in between such zones can be intermittently very hazardous.

Tactically, the ability to move rapidly in a vertical plane changes urban and mountain combat considerably. A fortified position on a mountainside or in a tall building can be directly assaulted as readily as one at ground level providing suitable transport is available. It is common for mid-tech societies to mount aerospace defences atop tall structures without considering the possibility of assault from grav vehicles. Higher tech cultures are more wary and provide better defences for such positions.

Large-scale TL9-10 forces are typically characterised by a mix of wheeled and grav vehicles. Wheeled transport is far cheaper and well suited to many roles – particularly security and counter-insurgency. Grav vehicles are typically used by high-end striking forces. Tracked vehicles are rare above TL9, although they still have some applications.

Mercenaries operating in the TL9-10 environment are likely to face weapons capable of penetrating their armour and destroying their vehicles – indeed, many mercenary units are outfitted at this Tech Level and going up against their state-owned equivalents. Higher-tech units do exist but the cost of outfitting them pushes up the hiring cost to the point where most patrons simply cannot afford it. As a result TL9-12 is the common equipment level for mercenary forces, with odd pieces of more advanced equipment. Such a force represents a balance of 'hirability' with effectiveness.

TL9 Grav Cavalry Squad

A TL9 world government has equipped its forces mainly for security and defence of critical locations, which are by definition urban. The term 'cavalry' is used in some locations to refer to light armoured forces but in this case – like many others – it is applied to an infantry force with organic grav transports. These are lightly armoured vehicles capable of offering fire support to their infantry component.

The squad is organised in two elements. The vehicle crew are armed with submachineguns for self-defence and wear a lighter version of the body armour used by the infantry. The vehicle itself is a rather basic TL9 grav sled armoured against small-arms fire. The crew of two ride in the cab, with the vehicle commander operating a remote turret on the dorsal surface of the vehicle. This mounts a light laser cannon suitable for fire support against most targets and is capable of damaging lightly armoured vehicles. The cannon can also be slaved into an aerospace defence net controlled by a command vehicle, creating a potent anti-air and anti-missile capability.

The infantry component consists of five personnel equipped with advanced combat rifles and one armed with the support version of the same weapon. This has a heavier, longer barrel and larger ammunition supply, enabling it to act as a light machinegun or marksman weapon. The squad leader, a junior sergeant, usually partners the support gunner whilst the other riflemen operate as pairs.

This force is optimised for rapid movement and short, hard strikes, trained to operate amid the spires of a city and conducting vertical operations where needed. Most tasks require only one or two vehicles and their infantry complement, so training emphasises initiative and small-unit operations rather than large-scale cooperation. The overall force is efficient at the squad and platoon level but not well suited to large-scale warfighting.

TL11-12

Advancing technology does not bring with it enormous shifts in doctrine at TL11. The basic principles of warfare in the starfaring age are well established. Where budgets permit, 'Warfighting' formations are usually based around lift infantry – infantry formations with grav transport, which usually takes the form of armoured vehicles equipped with support and aerospace defence weapons. Most other transport is also grav-mobile, including logistics and artillery. Preferences vary, however, with some states deploying fast, light grav-mobile striking forces and others preferring much heavier units.

Wheeled vehicles are used by less affluent powers but as a general rule the front-line forces of a government will be grav-mobile, with budget determining size and type of forces used. A few light grav tanks is typically seen as a better investment than a larger force of wheeled or tracked fighting vehicles, although these are common in a second-echelon role. Small states may have a hodgepodge of obsolescent equipment bought at a discount offworld, or a mess of different designs obtained on a one-off basis.

The main development in this era is in the field of high-energy weapons. Man-portable plasma guns and vehicle-mounted fusion guns increase the firepower available to ground forces by a significant margin and their tendency to produce secondary radiation imposes a need for enhanced personal protection. As a result infantry forces tend to become smaller but more heavily armoured, at least in front-line roles, with supporting troops often issued lighter protective equipment, which still offers some defence against radiation and chemical/biological hazards.

Whilst crude forms of battle dress – powered armour – are possible at TL11-12, the industry standard is combat armour. Essentially a heavily armoured vacc suit, combat armour incorporates sensors and information-sharing systems, enabling an infantry force to operate closely together and coordinate with other arms. High-capability secure communications ensure that what one soldier can see is shared among all other personnel and vehicles that may need the information. By the use of remote sensor platforms, a force can 'see the back of the hill' under most circumstances. However, over-reliance on this sort of technology can render poorly trained forces vulnerable to disruption or deception.

The cost of maintaining an effective front-line warfighting capability is such that many nations or world governments do not attempt to do so. Instead the emphasis is on lightly equipped security forces, with a small elite equipped to a high standard. If the prospect of a major war seems remote, expensive military equipment becomes a luxury. This does mean that as tensions rise there is a scramble to obtain suitable weaponry and train troops to use it. Mercenaries can find plenty of employment in this marketplace as trainers or leaders for the local formations, or in some cases as replacements. Some governments maintain a security force and little more than a framework for warfighting, to be filled out with whatever mercenary units are available.

TL10 Insurgent Band

Insurgencies arise for all manner of reasons and are rarely equipped in a uniform manner. Vehicles, in particular, are typically modified from civilian models or captured in a damaged condition and pressed into service for lack of anything better. This group sees itself as something of an elite among the insurgents, having made a couple of effective raids against 'soft' targets and obtained some military hardware. In reality, they are a band of gunmen capable of basic small-unit tactics but lacking the skills of trained professional soldiers.

The band is equipped with two civilian air/rafts, which have been armoured by attaching metal plates and placing sandbags in the passenger well for protection from upward fire. This makes the vehicles slow and clumsy but they still provide much better mobility than ground vehicles. Both are fitted with improvised pintle mounts, one of which carries a TL9 machinegun. The other has a crude laser support weapon thrown together from components of several laser rifles.

The insurgents are armed with a mix of civilian and military weapons. These range from advanced combat rifles to snub pistols stolen from a starport security locker. Some of the rebels have chest and limb protectors created by breaking up captured combat armour suits but most have no personal armour. Explosives, grenades and the like are also in short supply and ammunition is a constant problem due to the array of weapons in use. Nevertheless, this band is capable of striking unexpectedly and escaping before reinforcements can reach the combat area.

TL13+

Advancing technology produces refinements rather than revolutions for the most part and military forces are no exception. Gauss weapons are commonplace as small arms and light support systems, with man-portable plasma guns in use by some forces. Fusion guns gradually take over the direct-fire support role as they become lighter and more portable.

The introduction of reliable powered armour – battle dress – is not as revolutionary as its capabilities might suggest. Battle dress is useful for assault formations, which can choose when and where to begin their engagements but keeping it in the field for an extended time is expensive and imposes a heavy logistics overhead. Maintenance and support facilities are expensive and must be located close to the combat area. This in turn requires heavy protection, since eliminating a battle dress support element will result in the battle dress equipped unit being forced to withdraw.

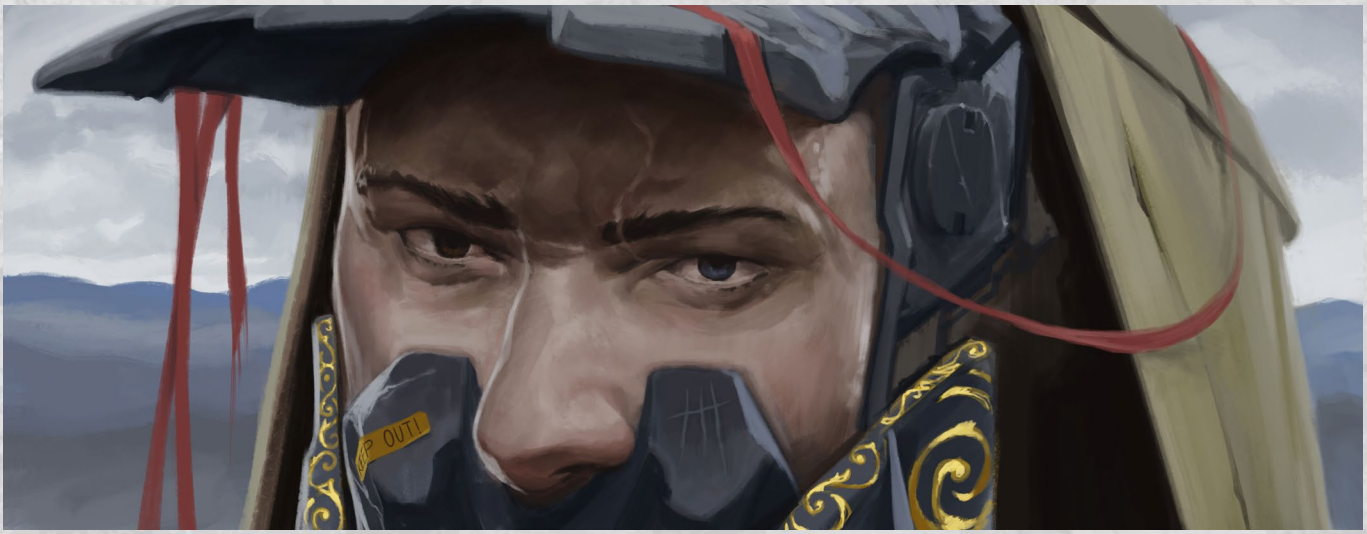
The prevalence of high-maintenance equipment creates additional opportunities for asymmetric warfare. An insurgent force or overmatched government might not be able to take on front-line enemy forces and win but crippling the support elements can tip the balance of a conflict. Likewise, high-end formations are often tasked with breaking through or bypassing front-line enemy forces to hit the supports. Kicking out the props in this manner is effective in all conflicts where technological systems are in use but it becomes ever more critical as higher-technology equipment is used. Small mercenary units can command a high fee for a 'striker' contract aimed at shifting the strategic balance in this manner during or just prior to a conflict.

TL14 Assault Infantry Section

This 10-soldier section is organised along standard 3-element lines. The 'command' element consists of a junior sergeant acting as section leader and a support gunner armed with a man-portable fusion gun. The two 'manoeuvre' elements each consist of four troopers in battle dress, three armed with gauss rifles and one with a support variant of the same weapon.

The section is capable of sustained combat, if 'sustained' means several hours, but would normally lead an assault on a specific section of the enemy defences before falling back for recharge and maintenance. Operations can be made with or without armoured or artillery support – danger close means something different when the friendlies are impervious to artillery fragmentation. However, suits can be damaged in small ways, eventually leading to failures or expensive replacements so as a rule they are deployed selectively and with solid planning.

When suited up the 10 troopers of the section are an extremely potent force but every in-suit hour requires a considerable amount of down time during which the battle dress is out of commission. This section requires a dedicated team of technicians with cradles and workshops for the armour, plus of course a security element if the unit is forward deployed. The cost of all this, plus the suits themselves, places massed battle dress formations out of the reach of most governments. Small units like this one may be deployed at crisis points or to deliver a decisive stroke but mercenaries are unlikely to face whole armies equipped in this manner.



C H A P T E R - T W O

KEY CONCEPTS

In order to resolve the raising, maintenance and operation of mercenary formations it is necessary to use some concepts not dissimilar to those found in the *Naval Campaign Sourcebook*. Attempting to play out every single incident or financial decision – and especially trying to keep accounts for the unit – would simply be too time-consuming. It is reasonable for a lone Traveller to keep track of ammunition and rations when on an adventure somewhere but doing the same for several hundred mercenaries with vehicles and support equipment is not feasible. On the other hand, the pressure of logistics is a driving force in warfare and must be accounted for, and the costs of maintaining equipment force a mercenary unit to keep finding new jobs. Without these factors the Travellers will have it all too easy – and the mercenary life is not supposed to be easy!

TICKETS AND ADVENTURES

In mercenary terms, a ticket is a contract or similar document that spells out what the mercenaries are expected to do and what they get for doing it. The mechanics of tickets in-game are dealt with on page 38 but the key concepts are detailed here. In this context, an 'adventure' is any incident played out in detail using the standard *Traveller* rules, whilst other terms are used for those matters that can be abstracted.

A ticket will specify the size and possibly type of unit required, the sort of operations that are to be carried out and some additional information if necessary. Often this is the only information made public when someone is hiring mercenaries. Those who want to know more will have to show they have a suitable unit for the ticket before the client will reveal further details. The remainder of the necessary information will be laid out in a few paragraphs for the consideration of the potential mercenary and if they are hired there is usually a lot of additional detail to be delivered in briefings or information packages. Many clients are secretive or even slightly deceptive with the public parts of a ticket – after all, if the potential target can read on a public hiring board that they are about to be attacked by a mercenary force, the operation may not go all that smoothly.

UNIT TYPE AND SIZE

Mercenary forces vary considerably but most parallel one of the standard unit sizes used by many militaries. A ticket will usually specify the unit size on the assumption that the force will be of suitable composition to get the job done. A force with an entirely different size and composition can bid for a ticket and may get it if the force's representatives are able to show they can provide the service required. What matters for the client is that the outcome is provided; the details are not usually of great interest.

Unit Size (Field Formations)

Unit Size	Composition (Infantry)	Average Unit Size	Hardware
Squad, Team, Single Piece of Hardware	2–6 infantry personnel. Squad-level support weapons if appropriate.	4	1 vehicle or similar asset
Section/Lance	6–12 infantry personnel.	8	2–3 vehicles or other assets
Platoon	20–50 infantry personnel. Platoon level support weapons if appropriate.	35	3–5 vehicles or other assets
Company	75–200 infantry, probably with some support such as an artillery weapon or a light armoured vehicle as a fire support platform.	150	12–18 vehicles or other assets
Battalion	400–800 infantry with basic combined-arms capability including artillery weapons, fire support platforms and electronic warfare systems.	600	50–80 vehicles or other assets

Most mercenary forces consist of infantry and support, although there may be specialist artillery, armoured, engineering and electronic warfare forces. Mercenary logistics and even medical formations are available for hire in some regions, although these tend to operate in major war zones most of the time. The assumption when a client specifies a unit type is typically an infantry force with sufficient vehicles to provide mobility and perhaps fire support. Additional capabilities such as artillery, armoured combat vehicles and the like may be part of the get-it-done package but the exact composition can vary considerably.

The Unit Size (Field Formations) table serves as a general guide to unit sizes, although often a piece of equipment can – if handled correctly – replace a segment of the force. The table below gives an indication of the typical size of military forces. A formation that is primarily composed of people, such as an infantry, assault, pioneer or a similar force uses the infantry column. Those where vehicles (for example tanks or nuclear dampers mounted on grav trucks) or large pieces of hardware (such as unpowered artillery pieces or static aerospace defence weapons) are the unit's main asset use the Hardware column. In this case, an appropriate number of crew for the vehicles is assumed to be present but not additional maintenance and workshop personnel. The unit leader's actual rank title can vary considerably but responsibilities are about equal.

A client will expect a force capable of doing the work of the formation that was hired but will not usually be picky about exact composition. Thus if an infantry battalion turns out to include a platoon of artillery weapons instead of some of its footsoldiers this will not raise issues unless the unit fails to fulfil its contract. In that case there may be legal issues or other reprisals if the client feels the unit was misrepresented.

Unit Strengths

Unit strengths can vary from one culture to another and different names may be used. However, for the purposes of mission and combat resolution standardised unit sizes are given. An alien warband with a strength of 82 personnel is closest to a company in size so would be treated as one for resolution purposes.

Unit strengths are not based on any particular Terran military of any particular era but on a rough average of typical units, rounded to make calculations simpler. For most field units a general rule of 'fours' is applied – a combat unit will typically have four times the personnel level of the next size down, plus a small number of command and miscellaneous personnel.

A 'reinforced' unit may be up to 50% larger than the average size for the type. Thus a reinforced company might contain up to 225 personnel. Whether or not a 190-soldier company counts as reinforced depends on its organisation and equipment level. If it is well set up to take advantage of the extra personnel and equipment it can be counted as a reinforced company. If it is simply a big infantry company the extra personnel are not such a major asset, although the force may count as 'overstrength' at the referee's discretion. The effect of these considerations on combat is discussed on page 77.

Most clients will query the situation if a unit varies too much from the expected composition and may declare the contract void if the unit is clearly not what was hired. A 'tank company' that has just two tanks and several civilian vehicles with improvised weapons cannot do the work it was hired for and will see its contracts voided – if its members are lucky.

Other terms are commonly used for some of these formations but it is desirable to have a baseline terminology to which other terms can be compared. A unit composed of multiple asset types is commonly termed a battlegroup, with size indicated by one of the standard types noted above. Thus a company battlegroup is roughly the size of a company and will probably have 3–5 platoon-sized sub-units but might include a mix of armoured combat vehicles, infantry and artillery weapons plus a combat engineering detachment.

A force is sometimes referred to as being 'reinforced', which can either mean it has higher capabilities than a standard unit of its type or that it has additional sub-units making it larger than average. An infantry force with five platoons of infantry and a light grav tank platoon might refer to itself as a reinforced infantry company or possibly as a reinforced company-sized infantry battlegroup. A reinforced version of a standard unit can be up to 50% larger than the average size for that unit and still function using the same command structure. If it grows beyond this it will start to have command and control issues and need reorganising, possibly as a unit of the next size up.

Mercenary forces above the size of a company are rare; divisional or larger forces extremely so. So many mercenary units are formed at company size that the term 'mercenary company' is used interchangeably with 'mercenary unit' or 'mercenary force'. Company-sized and smaller formations can find work more readily than large formations, although those that do exist command huge fees and can alter the balance of power in a region.

Sub-Units

A formation will be subdivided into sub-units of the next size down, which will also contain sub-units. For example, a battalion will contain several companies, possibly with some smaller units attached directly to the

Unit Composition

Unit Size	Typical Composition	Leader's Rank
Squad, Team, single Vehicle or piece of Hardware	2–6 personnel organised as a single unit, 1 vehicle or similar asset	Corporal
Section (infantry), Lance (vehicle), Division (artillery)	2–3 squads plus possibly a command element or 2–3 vehicles or other assets	Lance-Sergeant
Platoon (infantry or vehicles), Battery (artillery)	3–5 squads or similar elements or 3–5 vehicles or other assets	Second Lieutenant or Lieutenant
Company	3–5 platoons of personnel and/or hardware	Captain or Major
Battalion	3–5 companies of personnel and/or hardware	Lieutenant-Colonel or Colonel

Higher Formations

Unit Size	Typical Composition	Leader's Rank
Brigade	2–4 battalion equivalents with some additional fire support or artillery elements, and probably an integral logistics capability. Brigades are usually of a common force type such as infantry or armour.	Brigadier or Brigadier-General
Division	2–4 brigade equivalents and some attached formations including a mix of asset types. A combat division will almost always be a combined-arms force with infantry, armour and artillery plus supporting assets.	Major-General
Corps	2 or more division equivalents with full combined-arms capability.	Lieutenant-General
Army	2 or more corps and multiple smaller formations.	General
Battalion	3–5 companies of personnel and/or hardware.	Lieutenant-Colonel or Colonel

headquarters. Sub-units of the next size down are referred to as 'major sub-units' and their fate is significant to that of the force as a whole. Smaller sub-sub-units will not be so significant. Thus if a one of a battalion's companies (the next size down so a major sub-unit) is mauled, this may affect morale. A single platoon meeting the same fate will not have such a serious effect. Personnel will still care, of course, but a mangled platoon will not shake the confidence of a battalion the way the loss of one of its major sub-units would.

Unit Type

As already noted, the assumption is that the force will be suitable to the task at hand and that usually means a primarily infantry unit with supports and vehicles as appropriate. Some mission types are better suited to some force compositions than others. For example, striker missions require transport and may be better suited to a force geared up for high-intensity, short-term combat. Combat-armoured infantry riding lightly armoured transports, with a mix of light grav tanks and fire support grav sleds might be well suited to this role but too expensive for a security deployment. The latter requires more boots on the ground, with light vehicles rather than armoured combat platforms. Artillery weapons are little use in a security context, at least most of the time, so an artillery-heavy formation represents an addition to costs without much in the way of benefits. The composition of mercenary forces tends to be very lean as a result of these market forces, whilst at the same time it is desirable to have some all-arms capability – just in case.

The Unit Types table shows the most common military formations. Many other possibilities exist. Note that not all of these forces are likely to be encountered on the mercenary circuit; they are included for reference in case they are encountered in the field. Note that the term 'organic' does not refer to animals; in this context it means the unit has its own assets permanently attached.

ART TO COME

Unit Types

Type	Notes
Expert/ Specialist	Usually a small team of personnel specialising in a particular field such as assassins, bodyguards, cyber-warfare or some similar area of expertise.
Security	Lightly armed personnel specialising in peacekeeping, bodyguard, population-pacification and similar paramilitary areas.
Infantry	Typical footsoldiers, without organic transport assets but with the usual complement of man-portable support weapons such as heavy machineguns, mortars and the like.
Light Infantry	Footsoldiers without organic transport assets, and with little heavy equipment. Light infantry can be easily transported by other assets.
Heavy Infantry	Footsoldiers without organic transport assets with more than the usual complement of heavy weapons and heavier personal protection. Heavy infantry are normally best deployed for defensive operations.
Close Assault	Infantry specialising in close-quarters combat in cluttered or close terrain such as cities or installations.
Armoured Infantry	The term 'armoured infantry' is occasionally used to refer to an infantry force with a high proportion of supporting tanks or heavy armoured vehicles such as tank destroyers. It is more commonly applied to units equipped with powered personal armour.
Motorised Infantry	Motorised infantry has an organic transport element, composed of soft-skinned or very lightly armoured vehicles, which can mount support weapons.
Mechanised Infantry	Mechanised infantry has an organic transport element composed of armoured vehicles, usually mounting significant support weaponry.
Lift Infantry	Lift infantry has an organic transport element composed of grav-mobile armoured vehicles, usually with significant support weaponry.
Cavalry	The term 'cavalry' is usually applied to a force made up of infantry and lightly armoured combat or transport vehicles who work in close conjunction.
Air Cavalry	Air cavalry are rarely encountered on the mercenary circuit. The term is generally applied to forces that use helicopters for mobility, although some units that make use of light grav vehicles adopt the name.
Mounted Cavalry	The term cavalry is often used to refer to troops who make extensive use of vehicles. 'Mounted cavalry' explicitly refers to troops using horses or similar riding animals.
Mounted Infantry	Mounted infantry use riding animals for mobility. They are rare on the mercenary circuit, to say the least, but may be encountered as opposition.
Armoured Reconnaissance	Armoured reconnaissance formations typically use light, fast grav tanks and similar vehicles. In addition to their reconnaissance role they can act as a strike force or add firepower to an infantry formation.
Grav Gunship	Grav gunship formations are direct-fire support units or specialist grav tank-hunter units best suited to defence of urban areas.
Grav Armour	Grav armour formations are equipped with grav tanks and may have some lift infantry elements for support and security.
Artillery	Artillery formations come in various types – towed, mechanised and grav for the most part.
Aerospace Defence	Aerospace defence formations may be very light – such as a specialist infantry formation equipped with shoulder-fired missiles – but most have mobile or semi-mobile heavy weapons for long-range defence against aircraft, missiles, grav craft and even starships.
Combat Engineer	Combat engineering formations undertake construction and demolition tasks in a combat zone. They typically have a mix of ground and grav vehicles.

Exactly what category a unit falls into depends upon its composition and intended role. For example, a grav-cavalry battalion might comprise three companies of lift infantry, each with a few armoured reconnaissance vehicles mixed in to increase firepower, plus a grav gunship company. This force can carry out the grav cavalry role in battalion strength and is justified in using the term. A similar unit that has grav transport for some of its infantry and uses wheeled vehicles for the rest would not, as it is not fully grav-mobile.

Support Level

Normally a ticket does not specify who is to provide support for the mercenary force. If so, the mercenaries themselves are expected to bring with them everything they need for the operation or to obtain it whilst in position. This is common with short-term missions and is often convenient for both parties – the mercenaries can source their own ration packs, vehicle spares and ammunition for whatever weaponry they like to use rather than a client who may not have the right contacts.

Sometimes a ticket specifies limited support. This usually means locally available resources such as rations, boots and similar mundane items that do not need to be compatible with the mercenaries' own equipment, plus limited access to spares and maintenance facilities. Known as a 'thin ticket', this arrangement is usually little more than a convenience for both parties and is usually offered as a minor incentive rather than a reason to reduce the ticket fee. It does reduce overheads a little but the main benefit for the mercenaries is the ability to 'borrow' maintenance facilities on an occasional basis. This is sometimes possible anyway with a bit of negotiation but a contract clause allowing so many hours of workshop time can be highly useful.

A ticket may specify full support. This is rare and typically only offered on long-term security or training contracts, or where a mercenary force will be integrated into one set up locally. Known as a 'fat ticket', this arrangement makes the client responsible for maintenance and upkeep costs, and more importantly making sure supplies and ammunition actually reach the mercenary unit. Fat tickets are a pleasant option when spending several months training up a local force or acting as a garrison on a world that does not have a military of its own but they can be more of a headache to administer than they are worth. This is particularly true where the client is incompetent, corrupt or finds it difficult to obtain the right supplies. On the plus side, failure to deliver on a fat ticket is grounds for the mercenary unit to terminate the contract without being considered to have defaulted on it.

In some cases a contract may include a 'make-good' clause. Essentially this requires the client to replace some or all of the equipment rendered unserviceable and personnel lost in the course of the ticket. This is usually offered as an incentive to take on a risky mission or one with a high probability of heavy losses. Clients are generally unwilling to commit to such a clause and offering it too readily is generally seen as a 'red flag' by experienced mercenary commanders.

PLAYING OUT A TICKET

A ticket is the document that defines what the mercenary force is to do and what they get for it, and often the word 'ticket' is used for the gameplay that ensues as the situation is resolved. Some aspects of the ticket can be abstracted and it is often desirable to do so. The term 'ticket' is in some ways synonymous with 'mission' in the *Naval Campaign Sourcebook* but there are certain differences. In a naval campaign a ship and its crew will be given a lengthy mission with multiple components, each known as a Mission Segment. Since groundside operations happen on a different time scale, some terms have different meanings.

A Ticket can be subdivided into Missions, each of which is a self-contained undertaking. A Ticket may be a single Mission, especially where mercenaries are engaged to carry out an immediate raid or other short-term action, but more commonly there will be multiple Missions before the Ticket is concluded.

A Mission is a self-contained set of tasks intended to lead to a goal. It need not be related to combat; a delegation sent to negotiate a supply contract is carrying out a Mission as is a party out scrounging for spares and supplies. Several Missions can be underway at once but obviously individual members of the unit can only do one thing at a time.

Missions can be further subdivided into Operations. An Operation is a single task such as capturing a terrain feature or browbeating a local official into allowing the unit to park its tanks in the municipal pleasure gardens. Where a Mission can have multiple aims an Operation almost always has a single primary goal.

Any Mission or Operation can lead to an Adventure, in the sense that it can result in a situation that is played out using the standard *Traveller* rules. This often happens when something unexpected occurs. These situations are termed Incidents and do not necessarily have to be played out in detail. Sometimes the Travellers will hear about something going

unexpectedly wrong or right but not be in a position to do anything about it. The decision whether or not to play out an Incident falls equally upon the referee and Travellers, and depends entirely upon circumstances. Some groups of Travellers will want to play out every incident; others may be fixated on getting to the end of the ticket and collecting their payment. Neither approach is wrong but for a mercenary campaign to remain interesting the Travellers will need to get involved at some point and conversely they should not become bogged down in minutiae.

Missions and Adventures

The difference between a Mission and an Adventure is fundamental to the resolution system presented here. An Adventure in this context is a self-contained piece of gameplay that is interesting, challenging, threatening and hopefully rewarding. Multiple Adventures can occur during the course of a Mission and parts of a Mission can go well or badly without being played out as an Adventure.

To put this another way, a Mission is what the mercenary unit or part of it set out to do; Adventures are the interesting bits of what happens along the way.

The rules in this book will allow the referee to resolve the routine parts of a mercenary ticket and determine whether they generate incidents that might be worthy of an adventure. This could be something big, like a low-intensity conflict suddenly expanding and drawing in many more forces but a complex problem involving surly villagers who might or might not support the insurgents could also provide a great many role-playing opportunities. Even for mercenary soldiers, gunplay is not always the answer.

The mechanics presented in this book make use of a number of key terms and concepts that are introduced here and fully explained later. In order to keep these concepts as closely aligned as possible with the similar ones used in the *Naval Campaign Sourcebook*, we will use the term 'company' to refer to a mercenary force but this does not mean the force is necessarily of the same composition or organisation as an infantry company.

Company Efficiency Index (CEI): This is an indicator of the overall ability of a mercenary force and any of its members to deal with situations. It is used when abstracting events that affect the unit as a whole.

Effective Company Efficiency Index (ECEI): Where various factors modify CEI on a long-term basis but do not change the effectiveness of the force permanently, ECEI is used instead of CEI.

Detachment Efficiency Index (DEI): This is an indicator of the overall ability of a sub-unit or a detachment broken off from the main force. For example, if the headquarters detachment comes under attack the effectiveness of its response will be determined by its DEI, which might be greater or less than that of the unit as a whole. DEI is used when abstracting the results of smaller events.

Ticket Success Index (TSI): This is an indicator of how well the mission has gone. It reflects whether the mercenaries achieve their mission objectives and how well those objectives are accomplished.

Morale (MOR): This is an indicator of how content and confident the mercenaries are. A force with a low MOR will not be steady in action and MOR 0 will likely result in mutiny.

Reputation (REP): This is an indication of how well regarded the unit is in terms of reliability and competence. It is primarily used when negotiating with a client or opposing force.

Ticket: The overall task set for the mercenaries.

Mission: A self-contained set of tasks carried out by the mercenary unit or part of it.

Operation: A task carried out by the mercenary force or a detachment of it. There are usually several Operations in any given Mission.

Incident: A noteworthy occurrence that may be good, bad or neutral.

Adventure: Something unusual that happens during a mission, requiring the focus to shift from abstracted resolution to conventional roleplaying.

CHAPTER-THREE

TRAVELLERS IN A MERCENARY CAMPAIGN

A mercenary campaign is likely to revolve around professional soldiers, but not every Traveller has to have military experience. Even the most battle-hardened force has a place for noncombatants – lawyers, administrators, negotiators and hackers, to name a few. Some mercenary units are geared towards other forms of conflict such as cyber or economic warfare, although there will still usually be combat specialists in the unit.

History has shown that military forces need strong discipline and a clear chain of command. A band of warriors can be highly effective up to a point but ultimately will be beaten by a more disciplined and organised force. Thus a mercenary campaign will put Travellers in a position where they must obey (and probably also issue) orders. This may not be to the liking of some Travellers. If so, there are many semi-autonomous roles available in a mercenary force – snipers, scouts, electronic warfare or cyber-warfare wizards and the like. A certain amount of leeway can be granted to such talented people but mavericks who continually ignore the chain of command or are insolent to superiors will be corrected or removed from the force.

It is possible that mercenary Travellers are still in service. Normally, Travellers muster out of their previous careers before beginning play but this is not necessarily the case with a mercenary campaign. A period spent in the Army career (and possibly certain others) could represent working as part of a mercenary unit rather than the army of the Traveller's home government. However, it is simplest to complete Traveller creation up to the end of the last term and take all benefits accrued along the way even if the Traveller is still serving in the same unit.

The Travellers should be in the position of being decision-makers unless they really do not want to be. A campaign following the adventures of a lowly infantry squad could be very interesting but for the most part the Travellers will be leaders – if not the actual commanders – among their mercenary unit. The unit's commanding officer may or may not be one of the Travellers. This is generally desirable for relatively small units – up to company size – where the commanders are likely to be involved in any fighting but for larger formations the senior officers are likely to be planning and organising rather than getting their hands dirty.

Playing such officers is more likely to be an exercise in politics and diplomacy than gunplay, which might be exactly what the Travellers want. If not, they should be the decision-makers of a part of the force that often acts autonomously. These Travellers will be given a task and must use their initiative to get it done, often with little or no assistance from the rest of the force. In effect, the Travellers may be leading a company-sized force despite them being part of something much greater. This approach is also useful if the Travellers are vigorously opposed to making business decisions but if they will not take responsibility for running the unit they cannot complain if they are forced to operate on a shoestring.

Decision-Makers

The Travellers should hold important positions within their unit but that does not always translate to high rank or command responsibilities. An ordinary soldier who has repeatedly refused promotions may be the actual leader of their platoon, in that the officer is wise enough to follow the Traveller's lead so long as the Traveller is careful not to challenge the officer directly.

As a general rule, the Travellers should be the people who solve problems for their force. A deadly sniper might not be high in the chain of command but may well be the operative sent to 'make that problem go away and don't tell me the details'. Likewise the senior NCO in a unit is not an officer but would probably be consulted for advice when necessary. On the other hand some of the most senior officers in a force are constantly in the presence of people who outrank them and never get to exercise their own initiative.

Thus Travellers should be assigned roles where they get to make decisions rather than simply being given the highest-ranking positions in their force.

ASSIGNING ROLES

Assigning roles to the Travellers can sometimes be easy – and sometimes it is anything but. If the Travellers are raising their own mercenary force they will make all the decisions about who is in charge of what and the referee need not worry about it. If the Travellers join an existing force things are slightly different. They will need to be slotted in where their skills and experience make a good fit.

The rank a Traveller is assigned in a mercenary unit may not match the rank they attained in their previous career. A Traveller who joins a unit will be given a rank appropriate to their responsibilities and the size of the force. This may be equal to or lower than their previous rank; only rarely will it be higher. A few mercenary units have their own training programmes and some make use of independent mercenary training institutions but for the most part people are recruited to do what they already know how to do from their prior service.

Experience gained on the job may result in promotion once the Traveller has been with the unit for a while but opportunities are limited – especially in a small unit. Mercenaries can move from one force to another but this too is dependent on positions available. It is commonplace for rank to be reduced when a mercenary changes unit although occasionally an opportunity arises to gain a post above the Traveller's current rank.

A unit that has suffered heavy casualties or mass desertion may need to fill senior posts with anyone it can get. Upon occasion a government will be greatly expanding its forces and needs to appoint anyone with experience. This rarely goes all that well; each level of rank carries with it responsibilities that must be trained for. Someone trying to figure it all out will inevitably make mistakes. Thus when a government offers a Traveller with the rank of captain a post as commander of an entire battalion, red flags are generated. Why can a suitable officer not be found? The usual answer is that everyone is being over-promoted.

In this situation it may be that the lieutenant-colonel who would normally be given command of this battalion is serving as a brigadier in charge of several battalions – a post they are not trained for. Meanwhile the Traveller has jumped from second-in-command of a company to commanding officer of a battalion and has a whole new set of skills to learn. Subordinates are similarly out of their depth – the most senior of the company commanders is a former second-lieutenant with a little experience of leading a platoon and the senior non-commissioned officer is a corporal trying to do the job of a sergeant-major. The mercenaries will just have to make it work and at least they are being paid at a level commensurate with their new posts.

When a Traveller joins a new unit, they must determine what rank they are offered. Their application is based upon the highest rank they have successfully held. Usually this means the highest rank ever awarded but in the case where a Traveller has been obviously overpromoted this may be disregarded. A Traveller who left the army with the rank of lieutenant will have a

difficult time persuading a new employer they can be effective in the role of a colonel and the fact that the People's Liberation Force of Galactic Unity awarded that rank to all its officers after the only battle it ever won will do little to support the assertion.

As a rule, former officers will be given commissioned rank and enlisted personnel will remain such. The world's best sergeant-major may not have received the training required to function as an officer. Junior officers might agree to serve as sergeants until a suitable vacancy emerges but the opposite is rarely true. However, it is sometimes possible that officer status will be offered and if the Traveller performs satisfactorily they may be able to retain it in future contracts with other units.

During their career as a mercenary, a Traveller must keep track of what is known as their 'personal rank', the highest rank they have successfully held. Typically, successfully completing a mercenary ticket at a given rank is sufficient to consider it successfully held. A Traveller who leaves a military service can consider their final rank as their personal rank until they increase it in mercenary service – with one exception. If a Traveller left their career due to a mishap that can be construed as a dishonourable discharge they must consider their personal rank to be one level lower than their final service rank.

To determine the rank offered to a Traveller upon joining a unit, use the Offered Rank table. Ranks are a guideline; some units have different names for their leaders or assign different responsibilities to certain ranks.

When a Traveller determines the rank they are offered, they must make a check on the indicated skill. The difficulty of this check depends on the level of rank the Traveller is attempting to obtain, modified by the Traveller's personal rank.

Offered Rank

Traveller's Personal Rank	DM
Two Levels Higher	+2
One Level Higher	0
Same Level	–2
One Level Lower	–4
Two Levels Lower	–8
Qualified officer attempting to obtain enlisted rank	+4
Enlisted (sergeant and above) seeking officer rank	–4
Enlisted (corporal or below) seeking officer rank	–8

Mercenary units are generally reluctant to bring a new member in at whatever level their resume claims they have previously served at, even if a vacancy exists, not least because over-inflated resumes cost lives. Thus it is common for Travellers joining a new unit to come in at a lower rank than they have held elsewhere and to be promoted when they have proved themselves.

If the check to obtain a given rank is failed the Traveller can try for the next rank down but applies a DM equal to the negative Effect of the failed check. If the Traveller fails to obtain rank three times they will be offered the lowest rank available, which will be private for enlisted personnel and officer cadet for officers.

Enlisted personnel can try for rank either as an infantry soldier or a specialist. Most mercenaries are infantry, so there tend to be more slots available in this field than all others combined. 'Specialist' in this context means any non-infantry role – vehicle or artillery crews, electronic warfare technicals, combat engineers and the like. It is only possible to attempt to obtain a given level or rank in one or the other – infantry or specialist – but a mercenary who fails at one level can choose infantry or specialist at the next level down.

Travellers seeking commissioned (officer) rank can select command or staff. Command officers lead fighting forces and the unit as a whole; staff have a supporting role. Staff positions include assistants to high-ranking commanders, liaison and diplomatic officers, supply and logistics officers and the like. Staff officers sometimes find themselves thrust into a command role for lack of anyone else but they rarely perform as well as 'fighting' officers and are sometimes looked down upon by combat troops. It is possible for a staff officer to reach the very top echelons of a mercenary unit without going near a fight but such an officer would have difficulty winning the respect of combat troops.

Some units, especially those on long-term contract to affluent governments, may offer a promotion as an incentive to those joining, typically offsetting this by not paying as much as other forces. In such cases a Traveller must apply for a rank as normal but will then be promoted to the next one above after a short probationary period. Whether other mercenary units will be willing to recognise this inflated rank as a Traveller's personal rank is up to the referee. It may even be detrimental to their chances of getting a suitable post – the most 'fighty' units have very little regard for those who treat command positions as a sort of corporate ladder, taking jobs that bring with them spurious promotions for the sake of career advancement. Officers of that sort get people killed.

Rank and Responsibility

Enlisted Rank	Infantry Responsibility	Infantry Check	Specialist Responsibility	Specialist Check
Private	Me and my rifle	Automatic Acceptance	One job, such as driving a vehicle or loading an artillery piece	Automatic Acceptance
Lance Corporal	Leadership within a squad	Average (8+) Gun Combat	Leadership within a squad	Average (8+) relevant skill, Drive or Heavy Weapons
Corporal	Leader of a small squad, typically 3–6 personnel	Routine (6+) Leadership	Commander of a minor vehicle, system or team	Routine (6+) Leadership
Lance-Sergeant	Leader of a section or large squad, typically 6–12 personnel	Average (8+) Leadership	Commander of a major vehicle or an artillery weapon, electronic warfare system or similar	Average (8+) Leadership
Sergeant	Senior non-commissioned officer in a platoon	Difficult (10+) Leadership	Senior NCO in a platoon of around 4 vehicles or weapon systems	Difficult (10+) Leadership
Gunnery Sergeant	Senior non-commissioned officer in a company	Very Difficult (12+) Leadership	Senior NCO in an artillery, armoured or support company	Very Difficult (12+) Leadership
Sergeant-Major	Senior non-commissioned officer in a battalion	Formidable (14+) Leadership	Senior non-commissioned officer in an artillery, armoured or support battalion	Formidable (14+) Leadership
Commissioned Rank	Command Responsibility	Command Check	Staff Responsibility	Staff Check
Officer Cadet	As assigned on an ad-hoc basis	Average (8+) Leadership	As assigned on an ad-hoc basis	Average (8+) Admin
Second Lieutenant	Commanding officer of a platoon-sized unit (20–40 effectives)	Difficult (10+) Leadership	Liaison or assistant to a captain or major, or command of a small specialist group such as a group of transport assets	Difficult (10+) Admin
Lieutenant	Commanding officer of a platoon-sized unit or executive officer of a company-sized unit	Average (8+) Tactics and Average (8+) Leadership	Liaison or assistant to a major or more senior officer, or command of a specialist part of the unit such as logistics	Very Difficult (12+) Admin

ART TO

Enlisted Rank	Infantry Responsibility	Infantry Check	Specialist Responsibility	Specialist Check
Captain	Executive officer or possibly commanding officer of a company-sized unit	Difficult (10+) Tactics and Average (8+) Leadership	Liaison or assistant to a senior officer or commander of a specialist segment of a battalion sized force, such as intelligence officer	Difficult (10+) relevant skill (Diplomat for liaison, Admin for logistics and so on) and Routine (6+) Leadership
Major	Commanding officer of a company-sized unit or executive officer of a battalion sized unit	Difficult (10+) Tactics and Average (8+) Leadership	Liaison or assistant to a senior officer or commander of a specialist segment of a battalion sized or larger force, such as intelligence officer	Difficult (10+) relevant skill (Diplomat for liaison, Admin for logistics and so on) and Routine (6+) Leadership
Lieutenant-Colonel	Commanding Officer of a battalion sized unit	Difficult (10+) Tactics and Average (8+) Leadership	Liaison or assistant to a very senior officer or commander of a specialist segment of force greater than battalion sized	Difficult (10+) relevant skill (Diplomat for liaison, Admin for logistics and so on) and Average (8+) Leadership
Colonel	Commanding Officer of a reinforced battalion sized unit	Difficult (10+) Tactics and Average (8+) Leadership	N/A	N/A
Brigadier	Commanding Officer of a brigade sized unit	Very Difficult (12+) Tactics and Average (8+) Leadership	N/A	N/A
Major-General	Commanding Officer of a division sized formation	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lieutenant General	Commanding officer of a corps sized formation	N/A	N/A	N/A
General	Commanding officer of an army	N/A	N/A	N/A

COME

Ranks above Lieutenant-colonel are extremely rare in the mercenary world. Holders of such rank are minor legends and would be automatically appointed to a vacancy if they were available at the right time. It is highly unlikely a Traveller will be in a position to apply for a job as commander of a brigade or higher level formation – although they may manage to raise their own.

Example

Pavel has left the army with the rank of captain and decides to seek a career as a mercenary. He was honourably discharged and thus has a personal rank of captain. Hearing that a large mercenary force is hiring, he applies and easily passes the first round of recruitment. This is designed to weed out undesirables and those making spurious claims on their resume. Provisionally accepted by the unit, Pavel rather optimistically tries for a position as a company commander with the rank of major. He must make a Difficult Tactics check and an Average Leadership check, both with DM-4 because Pavel's personal rank is one level lower than the one he is trying for.

With the skills gained during his service, Pavel has an outside chance at this but fails with a combined Effect from the two skill checks of –3. He tries for a more modest post as a platoon commander, bringing with it the rank of lieutenant in this unit. Pavel now needs to make Average Leadership and Tactics checks, with DM-3 from the carried-over Effect of his previous failure. His personal rank is one level higher than he is applying for, which is more or less the industry standard, so Pavel has no DM for rank.

With his skill bonuses, Pavel has DM+2 on the Leadership check; with the DM-3 this is a net DM-1. He rolls 7 on 2D, for Effect –2. Not good. Pavel's Tactics DM is +3, cancelling out the carried-over DM-3. Pavel aces the Tactics test, rolling 11. This gives him Effect +3, which is sufficient to cancel out the DM-2 from the failed Leadership test. Although the unit's commanders have some reservations about his leadership ability, Pavel is clearly an excellent tactician and is offered the platoon commander's slot.

Pavel begins his service with the unit holding the rank of lieutenant but his personal rank remains captain. If he applies to another unit he would use that rank, not his current one that is specific to this force. Over time, Pavel proves himself and is promoted to captain in the unit and then major. When the time comes to move on he will use his personal rank of major to seek a suitable position in whatever unit he transfers to.

Promotion and Training

Once a Traveller has entered service with a mercenary unit they may be promoted in due course. However, promotion is not a small matter – especially for officers. In regular services it is usually preceded by several courses to provide the training required to function at the new level. Commanding a company is a more complex matter than leading a platoon, and commanding a battalion is still more difficult. Often wholly new skills have to be developed and the officer must learn to think in a different way. Someone uncomfortable in their new role, or who does not properly understand it, may be prone to acting as a lower-level officer. The army commander might do a marvellous job of siting that gun battery but meanwhile there are units waiting directionless.

In a mercenary unit, especially a small one, officer ranks are more about leadership and business decisions than directing an army. It is usually possible to learn the skills needed to run a company-sized unit on the job, perhaps with the aid of some distance-learning packages. Up to this point the leaders of a mercenary unit are just that – fighting leaders who also make some business decisions. As a force gets bigger or starts to incorporate multiple troop types formal training becomes ever more necessary. Promoting someone purely for fighting ability then hoping they will somehow figure out how to run the logistics and procurement for a battalion-sized force is a risky gambit at best.

Promotion is generally accompanied by a period of training or secondment to a force that can provide it. One way to do this is to arrange personnel exchanges with larger mercenary units or planetary armed forces. Sometimes this is done on a courtesy or mutual-benefit basis, with the seconded mercenaries sharing their experiences with local forces whilst receiving training from them. On other occasions it is a simple fee-for-service arrangement, although some mercenary units will carry out missions for a client in return for providing or arranging advanced training.

If the Travellers are running their own mercenary unit, they can make their own decisions about promotion and training. If they want to award themselves ridiculous titles there is really nothing to stop them, although this will affect the way their unit is perceived. Likewise, if they over-promote personnel without training they will inevitably run into problems. There is another factor that referees should keep in mind. It is common in entertainment for characters to be promoted for achieving trivial successes and also

at the end of every book, season or movie. The end result is a force where everyone is a general, admiral or space princess but nobody knows how to actually run a military force. The Travellers' expectations must be managed – they may become disaffected if they do not receive a promotion every mission, even if this is a ludicrous situation.

For small units – up to company size or so – the situation is usually quite simple. If there is a need for someone of a given rank then someone must be found. That may mean recruiting additional personnel or promoting someone and hoping they grow into the new role. This is another limiting factor that keeps the majority of mercenary units at company size or smaller. Any former officer is likely to have a skillset suitable for setting up and running a small mercenary unit but larger forces need multiple officers with a much more advanced set of skills and those that try to survive without them inevitably run into trouble.

CREATING PERSONNEL

It is possible to create every single member of a mercenary unit using the Traveller Creation rules in the *Traveller Core Rulebook* for a suitable career. Not everyone will come from the army or marines; former naval personnel are a good source of technical skills and merchants or those with a corporate background may be useful on the business side of the mercenary trade. Some units will take people with no relevant skills and train them from scratch – others will take them and throw them into combat for lack of anyone better.

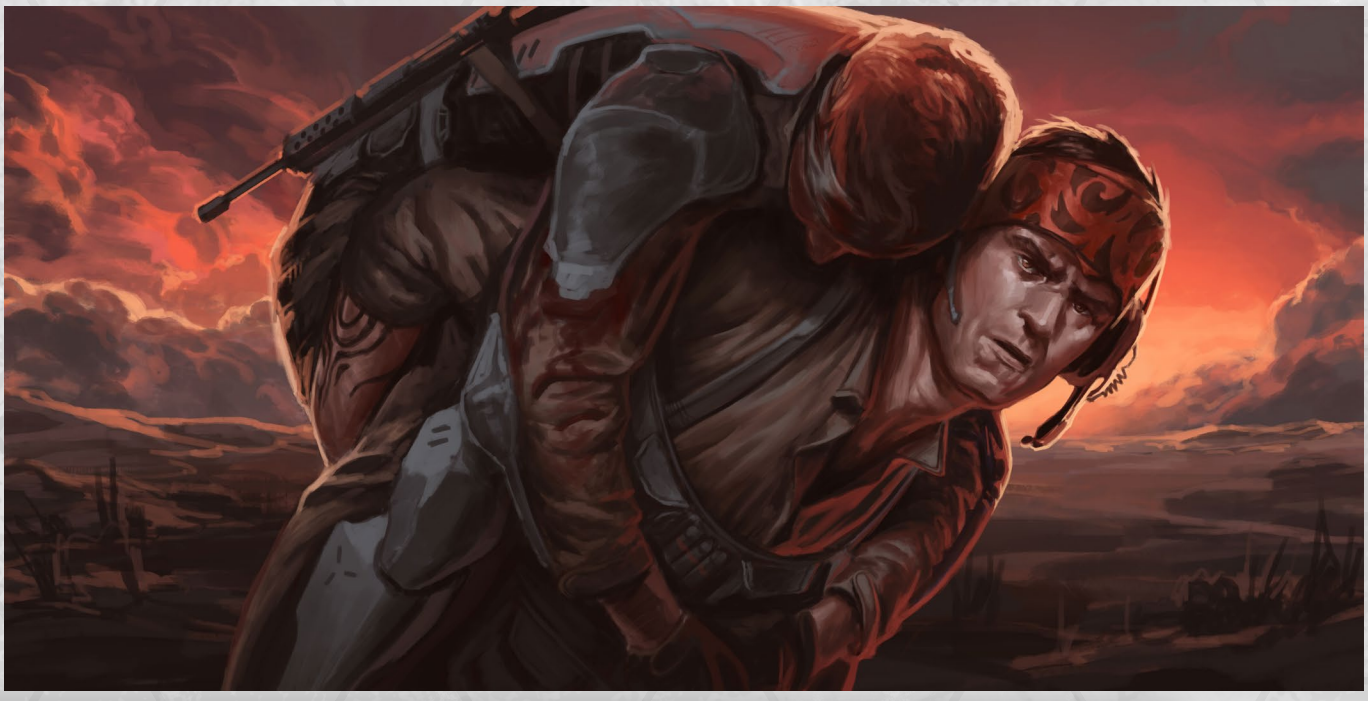
The Mercenary Creation table can be used to quickly generate mercenary personnel to fill out a roster. Skills are selected from four tables: Mercenary, Infantry, Specialist and Command. Note that this method is not recommended for Travellers, who should instead use the *Traveller Core Rulebook* for a suitable prior career as normal.

Mercenary skills relate to the mercenary life in general and may or may not be directly connected with the mercenary's current employment. For example, someone who has knocked about the sort of places where mercenaries are hired might pick up levels of Melee Combat or Streetwise without ever being part of a specialist backstreet brawling unit.

Infantry skills are the bread and butter of mercenary units, including most security and specialist forces. Infantry skills deal with direct combat. For example, a career solider will probably have been trained on most common small arms and support weapons, and thus gained Gun Combat and Heavy Weapons skills.

Specialist skills are mainly used by supporting troops, ranging from artillery and vehicle crews to combat engineering and medical personnel. For example a mercenary might be the squad's designated 'combat lifesaver' and have the Medic skill or have spent many hours delivering rations and gaining the Drive skill.

Command skills are necessary for junior and senior leadership positions. More senior personnel often need business and legal skills more than those relating to combat. For example a sergeant will likely have picked up levels in Leadership whereas a senior officer may have had to study law and business practice, thus gaining Advocate and Broker.



Mercenary Creation

Rank	Terms Completed	Automatic Skills	Skills
Colonel	7	Gun Combat 0, Leadership 1, Tactics 2, Admin 2	1 Infantry, 2 Specialist, 4 Command, 4 Mercenary
Lieutenant-Colonel	6	Gun Combat 0, Leadership 1, Tactics 2, Admin 2	1 Infantry, 1 Specialist, 3 Command, 3 Mercenary
Major	5	Gun Combat 0, Leadership 1, Tactics 1, Admin 1	1 Infantry, 1 Specialist, 3 Command, 3 Mercenary
Captain	4	Gun Combat 0, Leadership 1, Tactics 1	1 Infantry, 1 Specialist, 2 Command, 2 Mercenary
Lieutenant	3	Gun Combat 0, Leadership 1, Tactics 1	1 Infantry, 1 Specialist, 1 Command, 1 Mercenary
Second Lieutenant	2	Gun Combat 0, Leadership 0, Tactics 0	1 Infantry, 1 Specialist, 1 Command, 1 Mercenary
Officer Cadet	1	Gun Combat 0, Leadership 0, Tactics 0	1 Specialist, 1 Command
Sergeant-Major	7	Athletics 0, Gun Combat 1, Leadership 3, Tactics 1	4 Infantry, 2 Specialist, 3 Mercenary, 3 Command
Gunnery Sergeant	6	Athletics 0, Gun Combat 1, Leadership 2, Tactics 1	3 Infantry, 2 Specialist, 2 Mercenary, 2 Command
Sergeant	5	Athletics 0, Gun Combat, Leadership 2, Tactics 1	3 Infantry, 2 Specialist, 2 Mercenary, 1 Command
Lance-Sergeant	4	Athletics 0, Gun Combat 1, Leadership 1, Tactics 1	3 infantry, 1 Specialist, 2 Mercenary
Corporal	3	Athletics 0, Gun Combat 1, Leadership 1	2 Infantry, 1 Specialist, 1 Mercenary
Lance-Corporal	2	Athletics 0, Gun Combat 1	1 Infantry, 1 Specialist, 1 Mercenary
Private	1	Athletics 0, Gun Combat 1	1 Infantry or 1 Specialist
Recruit	0	Athletics 0, Gun Combat 0	Any one Infantry or Specialist skill at level 0

Personnel are still in the service so do not receive mustering out benefits. They are assumed to be D3 years into their current term, so personnel who need to have served three terms to hold their current rank will be 30+D3 years old and be somewhere in their fourth term of service.

Mercenary Skills

Infantry Skills	Specialist Skills	Command Skills	Mercenary Skills
+1 to STR, DEX or END	Mechanic	Admin	Gun Combat
Athletics	Electronics	Advocate	Melee Combat
Gun Combat	Medic	Diplomat	Streetwise
Heavy Weapons	Heavy Weapons	Persuade	Gambler
Melee Combat	Drive	Leadership	Recon
Medic	Flyer	Broker	Stealth
Recon	Seafarer	Investigate	Medic
Stealth	Explosives		Drive
	Vacc Suit		Athletics
			Survival

C H A P T E R - F O U R

RUNNING A MERCENARY CAMPAIGN

A mercenary campaign might be run in a sandbox style, with the Travellers taking on whatever tickets they feel like or it may be tightly scripted with a particular story to tell. Most campaigns fall somewhere in between these extremes. It is easiest for the referee to keep control over where the campaign goes if the Travellers are members of a mercenary unit controlled by someone else but there is great satisfaction to be had from making their own decisions and dealing with the problems they throw up.

It is also possible to use these rules to run a military or political-military campaign that is not quite the same as the mercenary campaign. The Travellers might be leaders among an insurgent movement gathering forces to overthrow an oppressive government or might be the leaders of a vicious street gang striving to take over the startown of a backwater world. The common denominator is that there is going to be violence and lots of it.

The referee must balance rewards against what is often termed 'bloat'. A mercenary unit that is making a modest profit will stay hungry and will take on risky jobs to obtain or be able to afford desirable equipment. One that is handed truckloads of money for every fight will soon be swanning around in gold-plated TL15 grav tanks and declining to get out of bed for under 100 million Credits. It can be difficult to find interesting things for such a unit to do and to provide a suitable challenge.

CAMPAIGN THEMES

Most campaigns have a general theme, which dictates both the feel of the game and the overall direction of the storyline. If the Travellers own their own mercenary force or aspire to, building it up and overcoming setbacks can be the theme of the campaign. However, it is still possible to have an overall campaign style and theme.

The Episodic Campaign

A campaign can take the form of a series of tickets, with events in between glossed over. In a campaign of this type the mercenary unit may find itself launching a strike against insurgent strongholds on a desert world one session and defending a city against alien invasion the next. Administrative and maintenance tasks are assumed to take place between the tickets but need not be played out. Likewise any given ticket may not be connected to an overall storyline – and there may not be an overall storyline other than the growth and development of the mercenary force.

The Great War

The mercenary campaign might be connected to a major conflict, such as the Fifth Frontier War of the Third Imperium or an ongoing battle for freedom against a tyrannical galactic empire. At least some tickets will be connected to an overall storyline for the conflict. It is possible that the course of the war may be decided by the outcome of the mercenary force's operations or the level of opposition they face might be determined by how well or badly the conflict is going.

The 'great war' in this context might be a local or planetary conflict or a huge clash between interstellar powers. Either way, the mercenaries will find themselves at the sharp end of the conflict and may end up generating their own missions. Indeed, rather than being offered a job for a fee they might be recruited as part of the forces of one side or the other, collecting the same salaries as regular soldiers. The mercenaries might become friends or rivals with other units fighting on the same side or may develop a special enmity for a particular unit or personality on the other side.

For example, mercenaries are hired by a group of small towns desperate to eradicate bandits from their region. After a few simple striker missions the Travellers realise the situation is spiralling out of control and civil war has broken out. With bands of raiders laying waste to the region the planetary government offers to take over the mercenaries' contract and asks them to raise and train a militia to defend the region. Soon the mercenaries are trying to coordinate a campaign of defence among dozens of towns, with only raw local volunteers to work with. The campaign then takes a sharp left turn when the government is toppled and the mercenaries find the defence force they trained turning into an insurgent movement loyal to their old employers. The new government offers to buy out their contract and ship them offworld but the Travellers have good friends

among the insurgents. Those willing but clueless farmers they trained are now a fledgeling army willing to take on the corrupt new government. Perhaps the Travellers can help bring the war to a successful conclusion… or perhaps they are leading their allies to destruction.

Political or Personal Goals

Mercenary work is a wonderful way to put together a battle-hardened combat force. Perhaps the Travellers or their patrons have an ultimate goal and need just such an army. The campaign will evolve as usual, with the Travellers taking on jobs to get money… but also to make contacts and obtain information. When the time is right the mercenary force will leave the fight-for-hire marketplace and strike for its ultimate goal.

For example, the Travellers are former soldiers who mutinied rather than serve a corrupt and tyrannical new government. Unable to do anything at the time they fled but have begun building a strike force to eliminate their enemies. The work their force takes on is unpalatable at times but that is where the big money is. Mercenary work is a means to an end and the memories of fallen comrades or murdered loved ones keep the Travellers working towards their goal.

When they have gathered their strength the Travellers will move to the final phase of their plan. A strike on government centres, leadership of a popular uprising and they will be able to take vengeance at last. Their aim may be to restore the rightful government or to create one of their own. At that time they will need declarations of support from governments that owe them a favour, shipments of arms brought in by friendly merchants and the reliable fighting power of their carefully honed mercenary force.

TRAVELLERS AND THEIR ROLES

The standard format for a mercenary campaign places the Travellers as owners and leaders of the mercenary unit, perhaps with some of the Travellers acting as commanders of sub-units or specialist officers. However, there are other options.

The Random Approach

It would be possible to create Travellers using the normal creation system in the *Traveller Core Rulebook* and assign them roles according to rank and suitability. This can work well for a scratch force or a one-off game but may not suit some or all of the Travellers if they are thrust into roles they are not comfortable with. This can cut both ways – some Travellers are utterly unsuited to a command role, uncomfortable in it, or both.

The Non-Player Commander

It is not necessary to assign all of the unit's senior positions to the Travellers. The referee may prefer to retain the role of the unit owner and/or commander, allowing a measure of control over the unit's actions. This is useful with Traveller groups who have a tendency be wayward or who have not yet grasped the concept of the mercenary campaign. Once they have been shown the ropes by this experienced commander they may be able to move into command roles or set up their own unit.

Having a non-player commander takes away a part of the decision-making from the Travellers, which can be a good thing and is actually preferable for some groups. It allows the referee to control the Travellers when necessary, since the commander's word is essentially law. A non-player commander might be incompetent of course, or may have a sinister agenda.

Seconded to Local Forces

If the Travellers' contract requires them to function as part of the local forces they may be assigned an officer as liaison or as their commander for the duration of the ticket. They may even be serving as an elite force guarding the local high command – or acting as troubleshooters for them. It is important to keep in mind that local officers are representatives of the client rather than members of the unit and that there may be a disconnect between orders as given and the terms of the contract.

Less Senior Travellers

Some or all of the Travellers may wish to play less senior positions – not everyone likes making big decisions! A campaign where the Travellers are low-ranking soldiers could be very interesting. They will be given general orders, with some discretion about how to carry them out, and may have little idea what is happening in terms of the 'big picture'. Alternatively, some Travellers may wish to take roles where they can participate in adventures but do not have big decisions to make whilst others are the leaders of the unit. The commander's bodyguard might be an interesting role to play, or the cyber-warfare expert. Nobody should be forced to take a role they feel is ineffectual or one they do not want, so junior Travellers must still have an area where they can excel.

As a variant on this theme, it may be desirable to have two sets of Travellers – 'leaders' and 'doers'. If so, the most senior member of the leaders group should be the most junior in the doers and so forth – unless the Traveller does not want to be in charge. Typically the doers will be the unit's odd-job-squad, assigned to carry out scrounging for supplies, intelligence-gathering raids

and most other hands-on tasks away from the main body of the unit. The doers will typically be enlisted personnel led by a very junior officer or two.

For those Travellers who do not want to be part of the chain of command, there are additional options. A unit might have civilian experts as its diplomats, hackers and administrators. These Travellers are limited in that they cannot give orders but have additional options not available to most personnel.

DEVELOPING THE CAMPAIGN

A mercenary campaign must be approached with some care. Mercenaries need conflicts to fight in, and a major conflict can change the setting or become implausible if it drags on without affecting events elsewhere. It can also become samey after a while. One answer is to have the mercenaries move from one ticket to another, fighting in different places against a variety of opposition, and to present a range of adventures rather than straight combat all the time.

A lesson to be learned from military science-fiction is that endless fight scenes will quickly become dull and what makes the story interesting is the why, where, what and who that goes along with it. Interesting characters – within the mercenary unit and outside it – are just as vital in a mercenary campaign as in other adventures. Bizarre opponents or clients from strange cultures can make an interesting change, as can the locations the mercenaries visit.

Mercenaries do not just fight. They also carouse in the local bars, meet people, go shopping and get involved in scams or side adventures that have nothing to do with their employment as soldiers. A mercenary campaign can include a great many other types of adventure and indeed might be a vehicle for them. It may be that the tickets-and-fighting part of the campaign is a backdrop to stories about the mercenaries themselves. Those stories could be almost anything.

Mercenaries providing security for a scientific expedition might find themselves at the centre of a classic 'horror in space' type adventure. It is common in such tales for the guards to be essentially scenery or used to show how the monster works… but what if just for once they are the heroes of the tale? Instead of 'the guards' guns didn't help, now the scientists or the free trader crew have to figure out a solution' the adventure might turn this trope on its head: 'their science didn't help. Fortunately we have lots of guns' or even 'our guns didn't help and the scientists are all dead. Now we need to figure out a solution!'. Instead of the plucky scientist or pilot inventing an improvised super-weapon we might see the mercenaries improvising some science.

Other classic adventure concepts can be turned around this way, moving the focus from the usual central characters to their guards. Alternatively, adventures might happen to the mercenaries on their vacation. Terrorists might take over a high-class resort, not realising that an entire company of mercenaries is there celebrating the completion of a lucrative contract. Perhaps friends or relatives of the mercenaries are in trouble and need assistance, or the mercenaries stumble over a clue to an ancient treasure whilst conducting training on a remote moon.

Adventures can also be part of a ticket. The mercenaries may have to navigate local politics or find a way to get weaponry they need. Sometimes such adventures generate themselves. If the mercenaries are facing the prospect of taking heavy casualties attacking an enemy fortress they might come up with an alternative. This might mean an undercover infiltration or a delegation sent to – legally or otherwise – obtain a weapon that will break the enemy's defences wide open.

The tone of a mercenary campaign is likely to be serious, with moments of tragedy. Lighter moments are necessary to provide a counterpoint but it is important not to allow the campaign to descend into flippancy or silliness. Black humour is quite acceptable; slapstick is not. There will be moments of pure comedy, of course, but these should be something experienced by the mercenaries rather than engineered for the sake of amusement.

There are many variations on the mercenary campaign, some of them highly unusual. A mercenary unit might be made up of many different species or have personnel from unusual backgrounds. Most mercenary units are formally organised along standard lines but it is possible that a unit might be made up of intellectuals, political radicals and a few religious zealots – and have a democratic leadership system. This is not to say that such a unit would be effective but it is possible. Alternatively, the unit might be highly specialised. A cyber-warfare unit will probably not go anywhere near a war zone if its personnel can help it, whilst a psionics-for-hire unit might find itself in some very strange environments. A unit might even have a stipulation that all personnel must be an expert in some academic or practical field, cornering the market for jobs beyond the capability of 'mere' combat soldiers.

However oddball the unit may be, its members will still need to give and obey orders. Failure to obey orders is more than an annoyance or minor act of rebellion. Someone who does not do what they are told can derail a plan and put others at risk or may affect the unit's bottom line if they cause a contract to be failed. Mercenary units are not tolerant of those that jeopardise their colleagues and the unit as a whole. Thus it is necessary to consider how much leeway the Travellers will have in following orders… or not.

One way around this problem is to assign a role with a great deal of independence to those Travellers who do not like a formal chain of command. They will be able to act autonomously most of the time, although they will still have to conform to a plan and give respect to their superiors when in contact with them. Even in this situation one factor that Travellers need to accept is that there is a command structure in place and those who oppose their superiors' decisions or simply ignore them may land themselves in trouble. Travellers must accept the boundaries of the campaign environment and agree to either remain within them or live with the consequences if they do not.

The referee should give thought to other factors before beginning the campaign. The existence of a hierarchy and chain of command can be a problem if high-ranking positions are given to Travellers who are not good strategists or whose attention tends to wander during a game. In a typical adventure the Traveller who has zoned out or insists on waffling on about a book they once read can be bypassed but if they are a critical link in the chain of command their inattention will bring proceedings to a halt. Likewise someone who abuses their position of command to give frivolous orders – or cannot think strategically and gives instructions guaranteed to lead to disaster – can wreck a mercenary campaign. The referee must balance fairness in letting all the Travellers have a shot at the most important roles with the need to have someone effective in them.

One important question is that of rank and 'screen time'. Low-ranking Travellers should not be relegated to simply rolling dice to carry out whatever their superiors have ordered. The answer is to place Travellers in important roles, which are not necessarily the highest-ranking. For example, the platoon marksman has to obey the orders of the platoon lieutenant but will often have to make decisions independently. The 'point man' at the head of a patrol might end up dictating the course of an engagement by what they did in the first few seconds and it is possible that an ordinary soldier might be the real leader of a unit.

The referee must also be aware that the Travellers might diverge from the campaign style. Those who have come to understand how mercenaries operate should be able to remain within the bounds of the campaign but some Travellers cannot resist the temptation to revert to a 'what's in it for me?' approach or will react to an overbearing or irritating client by tearing up the contract and turning on them. The consequences of such an action for a mercenary unit would be devastating and might result in a choice between allowing the Travellers to get away with it or ending the campaign.

One solution is to include frequent reminders that there are consequences for unprofessional behaviour. If the mercenaries operate through a regulating authority they will be penalised and might face criminal or civil legal action. A unit might end up losing some of its heavy equipment to pay a fine imposed by a civilian court over irregular behaviour. Trying to shoot their way out of that situation will make the mercenaries interstellar criminals, possibly hunted by bigger and better mercenary outfits chasing a bounty.

The referee can also provide guidance and some measure of deterrence by way of members of the unit. Even if the Travellers want to abandon their contract and stage a coup, they may face mutiny from more professional members of the force or their plans might be leaked to the local authorities. Ultimately the Travellers will make their choices and answer for them. So long as the referee has been fair and given them plenty of warning about the consequences of just doing as they please the Travellers have no right to complain if they face problems caused by their own actions.

RAISING AND RUNNING A MERCENARY FORCE

The mechanics of raising and operating a mercenary force are detailed in *Book 2: Running a Mercenary Force*. These mechanics are used 'behind the scenes' and need to be referenced rarely, if ever, when the mercenaries are actively engaged in their missions. When the mercenaries want to recruit personnel or procure equipment they can refer to *Book 2* for the appropriate processes.

Supplies and Logistics

Whilst most aspects of running a mercenary force are taken care of between tickets, the level of supplies available to a unit is important throughout. A logistics snarl-up can leave an otherwise effective force unable to fight for lack of ammunition and units can be forced to retreat from a good position for lack of food and water. Logistics can also lead to Missions and Adventures as the mercenaries try to obtain the supplies they need or get them from a depot to a forward operating base.

All of the supplies a unit uses – spare boots, ammunition, ration packs and so forth – are abstracted as Supply Units or SU. An SU for a ground unit is different from one intended for use by a naval ship and is only partially interchangeable. A naval crew plundering ground forces' supplies will obtain just 2D% of the number of SU seized. This is because whilst food and small-arms ammunition may be the same most of the tools and spares needed for a starship are not found in ground-forces depots. A ground unit stealing from (or trading with) the navy has the same problem but can obtain 3D% of the SU taken as more of it will be usable in some form.

The amount of SU consumed by a force depends on its size, complexity of equipment and what the force is doing. There are also efficiencies of scale regarding larger formations. The Supply Units table gives the SU cost of one day of operations. For simplicity, modest variations in force size are disregarded – a 120-soldier company can be assumed to use the same amount of supplies as a 180-strong company. A unit in barracks, conducting only light and routine training, requires half its routine operations allocation of supplies. Preparations for deployment or significant training count as routine operations.

Supply Units

Force Size	SU Per Day (Routine Operations)	SU Per Day (Combat Operations)
Squad	1	5
Section	2	10
Platoon	10	50
Company	35	175
Battalion	125	625
Infantry or specialist troops with vehicles	x2	x3
Armoured (battle dress equipped) Infantry	x2.5	x10
Light tanks and armoured fighting vehicles	x3	x5
Battle tanks and similar heavy vehicles	x5	x8
Artillery or heavy anti-aerospace weapons	x2.5	x4

Supply requirements are most easily calculated from the primary troop type of the main force. This is entirely acceptable if the vast majority of the unit is of a standard troop type, with just a few pieces of additional equipment. If the force contains a broad mix of unit types, SU requirements must be calculated on the basis of major sub-units or even lower-level units.

Example

Teegin's Legion is set up as an all-arms battalion-sized battlegroup. It is organised along conventional lines with four companies, each with four platoons and a small headquarters detachment. The battalion HQ is a platoon-sized unit including communications, administrative and security elements along with a light aerospace defence capability afforded by a pair of grav sleds armed with missile launchers and a laser cannon. The HQ also contains a few light vehicles and some grav trucks for logistics and general transport work.

Since the battalion contains a variety of troop types its supply requirements cannot be rated on a whole-unit basis. Instead the HQ and each company is rated separately and the total is used. The headquarters is considered to be a platoon of 'infantry with vehicles' since this is the nearest match. It requires 10 SU per day, multiplied by 2 or 20 SU per day on routine operations. If the unit is engaged in combat – even if the HQ is not – this will increase to 100 SU.

First Company is equipped as grav cavalry. Its four platoons each contain a light grav tank plus three grav APCs, each with a section of infantry aboard. This is considered to be 'light tanks and armoured fighting vehicles' for the purposes of supply requirement. First Company requires 105 SU per day, increasing to 525 SU per day in a combat environment.

Second and Third Companies are equipped as lift infantry and are considered to be 'infantry with vehicles'. Each requires 70 SU per day under normal conditions and 350 SU per day in combat.

Fourth Company is the support element for the other three. It contains a small mobile workshop, which is usually detached and left with the headquarters when Fourth Company enters combat. The workshop is considered to be a platoon-equivalent. The company also has an aerospace defence platoon of three grav sleds, an artillery platoon with five grav-mobile artillery pieces and a general-support platoon with a nuclear damper vehicle, another aerospace defence sled and a security element of lift infantry in a single grav APC. This platoon also has three air/rafts used for scouting. The whole collection is considered to be a platoon of 'artillery or heavy aerospace defence weapons'. It requires 88 SU per day, or 438 SU under combat conditions.

The battalion as a whole requires 353 SU per day under normal conditions and burns through 1,763 SU per day in combat. Keeping the force supplied is a major headache for the command staff or possibly a source of adventure ideas for the referee.

Capacity and Transportation

Any force can carry three times its routine supply requirement with it, which means that most units are capable of only one day of combat operations using their ready ammunition and supplies. An advance meeting little or no opposition, even in a war zone, would not be considered combat operations, as would low-intensity skirmishing. However, any serious fight will rapidly exhaust the supplies carried by a combat unit.

The problem can be resolved by establishing a suitable logistics chain and supply dumps at appropriate points. Static and mobile logistics assets must then be defended, which requires more troops – who use up more supplies! A logistician's work is never done and it is wisely said that amateurs study tactics whilst professionals give themselves stress-related personality disorders over the supply chain. This is important to a mercenary campaign as it can drive the Travellers to make risky decisions or accept less than perfect outcomes from their operations.

A pre-prepared supply dump can contain any amount of SU, although the contents must be secured, stored and organised in a logical fashion that make it possible to find what is needed in the correct quantities. If stored or transported in bulk, 100 SU consumes one displacement ton aboard a starship or two Spaces aboard a vehicle. Once broken out ready for quick use or made up into packages this increases to five Spaces for 100 SU or 20 SU per Space.

Some mercenary units rely on their employer for support, which can be problematical. The solution is to have a logistics component within the unit, which takes personnel away from the 'sharp end'. As a result, small mercenary units in particular are very lean in the logistics department. A standard six-seater air/raft can carry 20 SU in ready-to-use packages without conversion. By reducing the occupants to a pilot and a security trooper this can be increased to 100 SU. That is sufficient to support an infantry company for just over three days or to provide one day's support with two more stockpiled. This is a common solution to the logistics problem for company-sized formations, whereas larger forces typically require a dedicated support element either of their own or hired along with them.

Specialist logistics units are surprisingly common in the mercenary marketplace, since many local forces lack the capability to efficiently support a force in the field. Other units include logistics in a multi-faceted support provision, including electronic warfare, intelligence gathering and other specialist aspects of warfighting. Whilst not a substitute for advanced weapons and the training to use them, support formations of this sort enable lower-tech forces to function on the modern battlefield and ensure they have enough supplies to remain there.

If supplies are purchased from a specialist purveyor they have a nominal cost of Cr100 per SU, with bulk discounts bringing this down to Cr8000 for 100 SU and Cr650000 for 10,000 SU. A unit's leaders may be able to negotiate a better price or have the client pay for supplies as part of their contract. Costs increase greatly if different components must be sourced separately. In theory it is cheaper to buy ammunition in bulk in one place and uniforms somewhere else but this only works if the mercenaries are buying large quantities. Supplies must then be packaged for transportation and in such a way they last until needed. A brigade-sized or larger unit could save money by operating in this manner but for most units the additional costs of processing the supplies outweigh the benefit of buying them more cheaply.

Shortages and Reduced Rations

A unit that is short of supplies may deliberately reduce its usage or may have to if it is in danger of running out. A unit that is completely out of supplies can fight but at an enormously reduced level of capability. Troops will be issued a handful of rounds per day and ordered to shoot only in self-defence, avoiding contact or breaking off when enemies are encountered. It is possible for an inventive group of Travellers to find ways to harass the enemy with booby traps or even thrown rocks, or to obtain food and ammunition from the enemy, but the odds are against a force that runs out of supplies.

In the longer term, the amount of supplies a unit consumes can be reduced by efficient and diligent troops. Each week on deployment the unit's commander or logistics officer must make an Average (8+) Admin check. The unit's routine use of spares and supplies is reduced by 2.5% for every point of Effect. There are no penalties associated with this kind of reduction; it is the routine frugality of well-disciplined troops who know they may run short of something during a long deployment. This applies only to routine operations; combat still burns through supplies at the usual rate.

The supply budget can also be deliberately cut by putting the troops on short rations and refusing to issue replacements for damaged or lost equipment unless absolutely necessary. Again, this applies only to routine operations. This measure is sometimes used as supplies begin to run short but can also be employed to reduce the logistics burden of a remote outpost or allow a stockpile to be built up in case of a siege. The commanding officer decides how much to cut the supply budget by and makes a Difficult (10+) Leadership check with DM-1 per 5% reduction or part thereof. This cannot be combined with general unit efficiency as it is a deliberate shortening of rations and skimping on maintenance.

Any negative Effect on this Leadership check is applied to an immediate minor MOR check – this check is not made if an Effect of 0 or better is achieved, since unit has accepted the situation and agrees it is necessary. Grumbling and some internal black marketeering are likely but the crew will not suffer reduced MOR if the check is made.

For example, a mercenary infantry company is ordered to hold a remote outpost blocking a mountain pass and to conduct local patrols in the region. It requires 35 SU per day to conduct normal non-combat operations. The unit is highly efficient and its logistics officer makes a successful Admin check with Effect 3. The actual amount of supplies used is reduced by 7.5%, to 32, during the first week of operations.

However, a combination of hostile action and the inefficiency of local troops supporting the mercenaries results in supplies arriving intermittently. The commander is worried about the possibility that her unit's reserves might be used up quickly if the region goes 'hot'. She decides to cut the supply budget by 25%, to 26 SU per day, in order to build up a reserve. This requires a Difficult leadership check with DM-5, which she passes with Effect 0. The troops are not at all happy about the situation and make some interesting suggestions about what to do with whomever is responsible for the local logistics situation but their morale is not seriously affected this week. A new decision will have to be made next week but in the meantime the mercenaries go about their business efficiently… just with a lot more grumbling.

Effects of Supplies on Combat

A unit that starts the day with an adequate level of supplies fights as normal. If the supply level is not adequate there are two options. The unit can deliberately conserve ammunition and supplies, or it can use up what it has and hope it wins before the last rounds are fired.

Conserving ammunition and other supplies can be done one of two ways. Some sub-units can be more or less kept out of the fight and issued only enough supplies to defend themselves if directly attacked. These units are considered to be not available, which may deprive the unit of support bonuses or require that it be considered a smaller force. The referee will need to come up with a suitable narrative to describe what happens in realistic terms; keeping the artillery battery out of the fight will save a lot of supplies but it is not plausible to assume its ammunition is somehow transformed into advanced combat rifle bullets. Instead, the referee might state that the artillery has very little ammunition left for its guns and expends it in one barrage that breaks up an enemy attack. This saves the infantry from needing to fire their weapons. This, and the fact that the artillery crews have given up almost all of the ammunition for their personal weapons, has the desired effect without straining the bonds of disbelief.

A sub-unit that is kept out of the fight uses only its non-combat allocation of supplies that day. The same applies if a sub-unit is kept in reserve or not needed. A unit whose tanks are kept concealed for a surprise attack when the enemy does not expect it does not need to pay combat-level supply costs for them. Likewise an aerospace defence battery that has nothing to shoot at does not consume combat supplies. These units can be assumed to be in a state of readiness and can be committed at any time, then paying their full combat supply costs for the day.

Alternatively, the whole unit or any sub-unit can be required to conserve supplies. This means eschewing the usual prodigious expenditure of ammunition on suppressive fire. Instead most soldiers will act as spotters for the marksmen, firing only carefully aimed shots or in self-defence. Movement will be kept to a minimum and support from artillery or other units delivered only if absolutely necessary. For every 10% or part thereof a unit reduces its supply expenditure by, it receives DM-1 on all resolution checks. Expenditure cannot be reduced below 10%.

Field Repairs

Normally, repairs to vehicles and large pieces of hardware such as electronic warfare systems or artillery weapons are conducted at a base. Getting the damaged item there can be a challenge but the repair does not consume supplies. It is instead part of the maintenance and support required to run a mercenary unit. If the repair takes place between tickets it is resolved using the rules in *Book 2: Running a Mercenary Unit.*

When repairs are necessary to a vehicle or system in order to get it back into service quickly they must be undertaken as a field repair. This can be carried out as an Operation using the unit's CEI or the DEI of the maintenance detachment. The following modifiers apply:

Vehicle or system totally destroyed: No repair possible.
Vehicle or system crippled: –6
Vehicle or system disabled –4
Vehicle or system damaged: –2
Vehicle or system mission killed: 0
Basic mobile workshop available: +2
Comprehensive mobile workshop available: +4

'Mission-killed' means that the vehicle or system cannot do its job due to the failure or damage to a critical component rather than severe structural damage. A ground tank with a thrown track is mission-killed, as is a precision artillery system whose targeting sensor antennae are disabled.

An attempt at field repairs costs an amount of SU equal to the requirements of a squad of that type. For example a light grav tank squad (essentially a single vehicle) requires 25 SU per day of combat operations. If the repair fails another attempt can be made the following day. Three failures in a row means the vehicle or system has much more serious problems than were at first suspected and cannot be repaired in the field. Note that personnel cannot be repaired in this manner but warbots or other robotic systems can.

Obtaining Supplies

Normally when a unit is to be sent on a mission it should start out with a full load of supplies and provision for resupply in place. Mercenaries soon find that this is an ideal rather than reality and quite often they are expected to perform wonders on a shoestring budget. To determine the supply situation at the beginning of the active part of a ticket, the unit's commander or logistics officer must make an Average (8+) Admin check, adding the Effect to the result of a 2D roll.

Available Supplies

2D	Outcome
0 or less	The supply situation is disastrous. The unit has sufficient supplies for 2D days of non-combat operations at its forward base and an virtually nothing in reserve.
1–2	The supply situation is dire. The unit has sufficient supplies for 3D days of non-combat operations at its forward base and virtually nothing in reserve in the rear area.
3–4	The supply situation is poor. The unit has sufficient supplies for D3+1 days of combat operations at its forward base and a worryingly low amount in reserve for when resupply becomes necessary.
5–6	The supply situation is a little short. The unit has sufficient supplies for 1D+1 days of combat operations at its forward base. Reserves in the rear area are low but should be acceptable.
7–8	The supply situation is about average. The unit has sufficient supplies for 2D days of combat operations at its forward base and sufficient in reserve.
9–10	The supply situation is better than average. The unit has sufficient supplies for 2D+3days of combat operations at its forward base and plenty in reserve.
11–12	The unit is slightly overstocked in some areas, with some items it does not need that could be traded to other formations. The unit begins its mission with 3D+1 days' worth of combat supplies in its forward base and plenty more available when needed. It gains MOR +1. The excess is not huge, and might represent quality rather than quantity.
13 or more	The unit has far more than it needs, including many items that might be considered luxuries. The forward base contains 4D+2 days' worth of combat supplies, with mountains more just waiting to be brought forward. The unit gains a bonus of +1 to both ECEI and MOR until the supply situation changes.

If a unit has less than six days' worth of combat supplies (which equates to 30 days of non-combat operations) available at the beginning of a mission, MOR is reduced by –1. If less than two days' worth of combat supplies are available MOR is reduced by a total of –2.

Scrounging and Trading

A shortfall in stores can be offset in a variety of creative ways. This could be the subject of an adventure, in which case the referee should reward the Travellers appropriately if they succeed. If the attempt to obtain enough supplies is to be abstracted, then the Travellers may try each of the following once. Each attempt must be made by a different Traveller or segment of the crew.

Beg, Bargain and Bribe: Make an Average (8+) Persuade or Diplomat check to trade a few things another unit wanted, call in favours and generally work the system. This produces 1D days' worth of non-combat supplies per point of Effect.

Go Through Channels: Make an Average (8+) Admin or Advocate check to push through an expedited requisition. This produces 2D days' worth of non-combat supplies per point of Effect. Effect 0 produces an irritatingly vague acknowledgement that the problem will be given due consideration.

No Details: Make a Difficult (10+) Streetwise check to obtain supplies by 'some other means', which the commanding officer really does not want to know about. This produces 3D days' worth of non-combat supplies per point of Effect and possibly repercussions immediately or later.

Go Outside the System: Solutions like raiding stealing supplies from other units or government stockpiles are the subject of adventures and should be played out in detail.

Plundering

Ammunition, rations and necessary components can often be obtained from dead or captured enemy personnel or from comrades unable to fight on. Plundering a similar unit will typically yield 2D days' worth of non-combat supplies per point of Effect on an Average (8+) Recon check. This may be reduced if the enemy unit uses very different equipment or was also short of supplies.

Plundering a civilian area – generally referred to as 'looting' by the War Crimes Commissions but sometimes justifiable if presented in the right way – will produce 1D days' worth of non-combat supplies per point of Effect on an Average (8+) Streetwise check. A company-sized unit can plunder a modest sized village in a few hours or less if care is not taken to avoid unnecessary destruction. Methodically moving through a town or city can yield reasonable amounts of food and other supplies but relatively little ammunition. A unit supporting itself in this manner might end up placing its advanced weapons in storage and using local civilian small arms until stocks of ammunition are rebuilt.

INFORMATION AND INTELLIGENCE

Information is vital to military operations and intelligence supplied to a unit can be notoriously patchy or inaccurate. A wise mercenary commander establishes their own sources of intelligence and many larger mercenary units have an intelligence detachment of their own. There are even mercenary intelligence gathering and analysis units, which specialise in obtaining accurate information and getting it into the right hands.

Deception is a major part of warfare and the mercenaries may be able to gain an advantage by deceiving their enemies. On the other hand they may fall for a deception carried out by the enemy or simply misinterpret information made available to them. Bad information can be used as a plot device by the referee in many ways. A treacherous patron who wants to eliminate the mercenaries rather than pay them might send them into a death-trap or arrange for them to be put in a position where they can be blamed for an atrocity. Patrons might also misrepresent the situation to get the mercenaries to take a job they otherwise would not or to get them to agree a lower fee. It might be that the patron has been deceived by someone else, creating a situation where the patron feeds bad information to the mercenaries in good faith.

Obtaining good intelligence might be the focus of a mission or could be something the Travellers feel they need to do before plunging into a situation. Either way, there are two main kinds of intelligence that can be sought.

Routine intelligence gathering is carried out all the time. Direct methods include reports made by personnel and vehicles conducting reconnaissance, satellite imagery feeds and interception of enemy transmissions. Routine intelligence gathering produces a great deal of raw data that must be collated to search for patterns and anomalies. For example, a unit may keep drones in the air watching the local area but finding a pattern in the movements of local traffic requires considerable analysis work. A shift in that pattern can provide warning that something is happening.

Specific intelligence gathering has a particular objective in mind. For example, a sub-unit might be sent to conduct reconnaissance of a nearby area in order to build an estimate of hostile forces present and the ability of the enemy regional command to support those forces. This in turn can lead to a good estimate of whether or not an offensive can be

expected from that direction. Alternatively, the unit might set out to recruit informants or snatch enemy officers for interrogation.

Intelligence Events

An Intelligence Event is a point at which the quality of information available or its analysis needs to be determined. One normally occurs at the beginning of a mission or ticket, determining the sort of information available at that time. The Travellers may decide to conduct more analysis or gather better data before acting.

Adventure leads or plot-related information gleaned from analysis of routine intelligence gathering are best used as a plot device, with information becoming available when the referee wants to reveal it. Analysis normally takes a predictable length of time. That is, the intelligence staff will have some answers at round about the time they say they will. However, accuracy is improved by taking longer and cross-referencing more. It is unrealistic to expect every piece of routine analysis to be conducted in this manner however; it is a big job and very time-consuming. The normal practice is to conduct routine analysis at a standard rate and focus in on anything that stands out.

Intelligence analysis uses the Investigate skill, although raw data may be gathered by various means using a range of skills. The referee should call for an Investigate check using the intelligence's officer's skill or relevant Efficiency Index. Normal difficulty is Average (8+) for routine analysis. The referee may wish to make this check in secret, ensuring the Travellers do not know how accurate their information is. Alternatively, the check can be made openly and the result used to modify further checks to abstract the next operation undertaken by the Travellers' unit.

Specialist intelligence-analysis software packages are available, which can automatically generate useable information from a mass of raw data. Their output is rather simplistic unless they are used by a trained intelligence analyst. If the Travellers want to rely on auto-analysis the referee is justified in presenting the information in an almost oracular way on some occasions, in this case the device does what it is programmed to do but the Travellers' interpretation skills are lacking. On other occasions an auto-analysis unit will provide clear and simple information that is correct but may not be the whole story. A basic auto-analysis package and a secure portacomp to run it on costs MCr1. There are usually restrictions on the sale of such devices, requiring accredited mercenary status. This can be circumvented using the black market but costs are higher. A basic auto-analysis unit is treated as having Investigate 0 for the purposes of military intelligence analysis only.

Intelligence Events

Effect of Investigate Check	Result
–6 or worse	Information is confusing, contradictory and basically useless. DM-4 applies to mission or operation resolution until better information is available.
–4 to –5	Information seems reasonably comprehensive and reliable but contains serious omissions and errors. DM-1 applies to mission and operation resolution and an Incident occurs.
–3 to –1	Partial information is available but inaccurate in places or has serious gaps. DM-2 applies to mission and operation resolution.
0	Sufficient information is available but vague or patchy and contains a number of inaccuracies. DM-1 applies to mission and operation resolution.
1–3	Sufficient information is available and reasonably reliable. No modifier is applied to mission and operation resolution.
3–5	Good, solid intelligence is available. DM+1 applies to mission and operation resolution.
6 or better	Good, solid intelligence is available. DM+2 applies to mission and operation resolution. In addition, an unexpected opportunity is spotted.

Intelligence Missions

Deliberate gathering of intelligence, such as a drone overflight of a suspected insurgent base or a patrol sent deep into enemy territory may be the stuff of adventures, especially if something goes awry. Alternatively, it can be abstracted using the standard mission segment resolution system (see page 66). Information gathered must still be analysed and collated but when the Travellers have gone to the trouble of obtaining data by their own efforts they should usually be rewarded with reliable intelligence… unless of course someone wanted them to obtain and believe deceptive information.

CAMPAIGN EVENTS

Campaign Events typically occur between tickets but could happen during one. To qualify as a Campaign Event, an incident must have some effect on the political situation or the ability of the Travellers to carry out their missions. This could be something as grand as the outbreak of a major war or the arrest of a local leader to face charges of treason but might be much narrower in focus such as an incident depriving the Travellers' unit of its regular source of supplies.

The referee can impose Campaign Events they see fit, although it is worth thinking through the implications. If war breaks out today, it will still be going on for the next few months. This could take the campaign in an unexpected direction – which might be good or may derail the intended plot. It is therefore best to keep incidents below the threshold of setting-changing events unless the referee wants something big to happen.

How often Campaign Events take place is a matter for referee discretion. As a rule of thumb, roll 2D before each ticket. On 8+ an incident will occur before or during it.

Campaign Events

2D	Event
2	Rumours of War: A potentially major incident takes places within a few parsecs, threatening the stability of the local area or war with an external power. This situation will be ongoing for months or even years and can affect the mercenaries directly or indirectly.
3	Local Conflict: A minor conflict, possibly unrelated to the current ticket, breaks out wherever the Travellers are operating. The situation is complex and has the potential to spread.
4	Mutiny: An allied unit goes over to the other side or mutinies against its officers. Members of the mercenary unit may be caught up in the situation. The unit might come under pressure to resolve the situation or to join the mutineers… or both.
5	Nearby Incident: The rumour mill is abuzz with talk of a locally significant incident. This might be a flare-up in an insurrection or sabre-rattling between a government and a corporate entity that threatens to escalate. Details are sketchy as yet but there is reason to believe the local situation might be destabilised in the immediate future unless action is taken.
6	Distant Incident: A major incident has occurred outside the Travellers' immediate area of interest. This will have repercussions at some point, such as an influx of experienced soldiers or insurgents displaced by a conflict ending.
7	Show of Force: The mercenaries are hired to be part of a show of force that is not expected to escalate into conflict. This might be an effort to deter aggression or to demonstrate intent ahead of a treaty or corporate negotiation. The fee is low but the assignment promises to be safe; an opportunity to rest, train and integrate some new recruits. Occasionally such a contract is not what it seems.
8	Thinned Out: Just after taking on a new contract the unit discovers that its allies or local support are being heavily depleted to deal with needs arising elsewhere.
9	Reinforced: Additional units are assigned to the area. These might be mercenaries or local forces and may be an asset or a hindrance.
10	Redeployment: Friendly units are suddenly redeployed. This may include the mercenaries, who might be sent to an entirely different area with an environment they are not trained or equipped for. Alternatively, local forces are redeployed, perhaps requiring unreliable units to take on an important role.
11	Command Reshuffle: A senior officer is suddenly transferred, promoted or cashiered, leaving a hole in the command structure that must be filled. Local forces are thrown into confusion for a few weeks, with garbled orders and unaccountable delays in receiving resupply.
12	Top Brass: Local forces are selected to receive a visit from the top brass or nobility. Local commanders are determined to look as good as possible, imposing additional tasks on units under their command whilst requiring them to be as presentable as possible.

C H A P T E R - F I V E

TICKETS

A mercenary campaign is likely to take the form of a series of contracts, or tickets, which may or may not be related to one another. A ticket specifies what sort of unit is required and what it will be expected to do. The details are generally left to the discretion of the mercenary commanders, although most clients will want 'clean' or at least deniable operations. Some tickets can be carried out by a variety of unit types but some require specialist capabilities.

A ticket will specify the success conditions insisted upon by the client. In some cases, known as success-only tickets, the mercenary force can only expect payment in the event that the ticket success criteria are satisfied. It is sometimes possible for a mercenary force to extract payment from an unwilling client by legal means or strongarm tactics but on the whole the more a unit achieves the more likely it is to be paid without argument.

COMMANDO

A commando ticket is usually short and payable for success only. It will usually require the unit to get deep into enemy territory and eliminate or capture something or someone. More general mayhem is also possible, especially in an ongoing conflict and in some cases the contract will call for multiple raids against sensitive targets. A set of such raids can leave an enemy leaderless, lacking in supplies and confused; chasing shadows around the rear area whilst large-scale forces are advancing through the border zone.

Commando missions require small, highly capable forces capable of striking hard and by surprise. Suitable units often have a commando element and a larger intelligence/infiltration/exfiltration and support element, although this is not always the case. The 'contact' element of a commando unit is rarely larger than a platoon and usually smaller, especially where battle dress equipped troops are concerned.

STRIKER

Striker tickets are similar to commando contracts but tend to be larger in scale and less subtle in setup. Where a commando force will typically infiltrate enemy territory by stealth and sometimes deception, a striker unit is more likely to rely on speed and firepower to dash through to the objective. Surprise is still valuable and deception will be employed, if possible, but striker missions are more blatant than commando raids, generally more destructive and less deniable.

Striker contracts require a force with high direct-fire capability, good mobility and usually some support in the form of artillery or aerospace platforms mounting direct-fire weapons or missiles. Strike formations are typically platoon- or company-sized, with the occasional battalion-sized force commanding a very high fee. A striker unit can inflict a series of sharp blows on an enemy force, especially one of lower Tech Level, causing it to collapse or crumble in the face of massed attack by local units.

WARFIGHTING

Warfighting tickets are usually long-term, in the sense of months or 'duration of hostilities'. The mercenary unit will normally be integrated into the local forces' command structure, possibly as part of an entire army built out of mercenary formations. This can work well when units respect one another but rivalries or even enmity stemming from being on opposite sides in the past can get in the way of cooperation.

Unless a large force is being built out of company-sized units – which is a challenge, to say the least – warfighting is usually the preserve of battalion-sized or larger formations. Smaller units may also be hired to stiffen local formations or carry out critical missions – a small command or strike unit can be hired on a warfighting contract if the need is perceived but large ready-made combat forces are preferred by most clients.

CADRE

A cadre ticket is generally synonymous with 'providing training and leadership to local forces', although occasionally a different take on the term is encountered. Cadre units must be capable of fighting and may be called upon to accompany their students in action but their primary role is to increase the capabilities of local forces. This may be through formally delivered training, although some cadre units deploy as the framework of a battalion or even larger force and take in local recruits to create full-sized combat forces. Once the local unit is capable of operating without the embedded mercenaries they are withdrawn to begin the process with new recruits.

Cadre units often have a number of personnel equivalent to a reinforced company but are structured as a battalion or even a higher formation. Some of the unit's personnel are dedicated training staff including simulator operators and exercise umpires but most will be combat-experienced in some capacity. Sometimes equipment if very mixed, allowing local forces to gain experience of a range of commonly-available systems. In addition to serving as a training formation or what is essentially a temporary military academy, some cadre forces are equipped to serve as 'OPFORS' units, simulating likely enemies' capabilities and tactics.

An alternative form of cadre ticket requires a highly specialised force type capable of conducting a force review and advising a local government on what sort of equipment it needs to procure. Most such units are capable of demonstrating why these capabilities are needed, at least on a small scale, and have the contacts to obtain what is needed. The contract usually includes the provision of training to bring the local force up to an adequate standard with its new equipment or in its new role.

SECURITY

Security tickets typically require a small force – platoon or smaller – to protect an installation or person. There are exceptions, however. Specialist security battalions exist that can protect a centre of government against a wide range of threats. Such forces usually have electronic warfare, cyber-security, aerospace defence and nuclear damper capabilities as well as physical combat assets.

Some security units specialise in bodyguard work or transporting valuable items, whilst others provide a ready-made law enforcement or installation security package. The latter is common in the corporate sector, where an installation might be under threat from insurgents, protestors or a world government that has taken a dislike to the installation's owners. Equipment can thus vary considerably but one thing most security units have in common is more boots on the ground than a striker or warfighting unit.

SUPPORT

Support tickets are almost always specific to a unit type or set of capabilities that are not connected with direct ground combat. Examples include electronic warfare, intelligence, logistics and medical units, and more commonly artillery and aerospace defence. Support formations often have a good working relationship with other mercenary units and may have assisted them in the past but equally they may have at one point shelled the unit they are now hired to support.

Most support units are relatively small; typically platoon- or company-sized and the larger ones are often diverse. An example would be an artillery company that has three platoons of artillery weapons, an aerospace defence platoon and a security/logistics platoon to keep the guns supplied with ammunition. Larger formations do exist, commanding a huge fee to provide a planetary government with ready-made anti-orbital defences or heavy artillery to support its front-line ground troops.

SPECIALIST

The specialist category is something of a catch-all for tickets that do not fit in another category or require unusual skills or equipment. Specialist tickets are also offered for small units (typically squad or section) or even individuals. Examples include a need for a cyber-warfare team for a covert operation or a commander for the world's aerospace defence network. It is not uncommon for a cadre mission to create a reasonable capability but for ongoing leadership to be necessary in order to maintain and make best use of it. In this case the cadre unit may not want to leave personnel behind so might recommend an individual or the patron may choose to hire someone either to train a local commander or as a long-term holder of the position. It is possible for a mercenary unit to run into a former member who is now a high-ranking officer in a planetary force or who is known to unit members from their regular service days elsewhere.

STRUCTURE OF A TICKET

A mercenary ticket is not the same thing as a typical Traveller adventure. In fact an entire ticket could be completed without anything that would be considered an adventure taking place. This is not usually the case; a ticket can spawn many small adventures to be played out with the standard rules but it is not structured like the typical adventure.

A ticket will specify a set of criteria the client wants to be met and the success (or otherwise) of the ticket is based on whether the client thinks these were met. No matter what awesome heroics the unit performed, even if they kerb-stomped their opponents and roared to victory without apparent effort, what matters is client satisfaction. Similarly, it may be possible to convince the client that the unit did better than they actually did. This is risky, as a unit that gains a reputation for faking success to claim its fee may find itself out of business.

A ticket is subdivided into missions and those are further divided into operations. Tickets and missions should be self-contained, although they may chain together into a larger narrative. The routine daily life of the mercenaries – which includes some hazardous activities – are normally glossed over until something out of the ordinary happens. Even a brief exchange of fire with local insurgents might be all in a day's work for experienced mercenaries; it is not until things get tough or something goes wrong that the mission becomes interesting.

A ticket should have a distinct beginning and end, as should the missions required to complete it. Within a mission it is likely there will be multiple operations, which are also self-contained. Indeed, every action should have a distinct start and stop. The difference between a mission and an operation is in terms of simplicity and focus; an operation has a single goal such as 'clear insurgents from the town hall' whereas a mission might have multiple such targets. Any action that can be subdivided into single-goal tasks is a mission – but a mission can be resolved as a whole or subdivided at the referee's discretion.

Sometimes missions or operations must be carried out simultaneously. For this reason a mission is subdivided into phases if necessary. Once all operations in that phase are resolved the mission can progress to the next phase – but note that 'resolved' does not mean 'successful'. The mercenary commanders will have to decide to progress or abort the mission if some of the operations fail. They may also decide to move to the next phase without completing an operation if necessary. The timing of a phase is noted if relevant. For a short mission, timing tends to be rapid and on an 'as soon as ready' basis but missions requiring some preparation may have timings over several days. These can always be altered on the commander's orders but messing with the timetable can dislocate the whole mission.

Example

A commando mission has the following phase. Operation 1 requires the assault team to move into position and eliminate the outer guards silently using knives and similar stealthy methods. Operation 2 requires the unit's two snipers to eliminate inaccessible guards, at which point Operation 3 is launched. This is a 'loud' entry to the target building and elimination of the remaining opposition.

In the event, resolution of Operation 1 goes poorly and the mercenaries are detected before they can eliminate the roving guards. The mercenary commander orders Operation 2 implemented and adds an order to 'take out any other guards you see'. The snipers try to do this and again it goes poorly. Although there are still guards active, the commander really has no choice but to go to Operation 3 or abort the whole phase.

Tickets and Subdivisions

Ticket: A set of tasks and objectives leading to an overall goal desired by the client.
Mission: A complex task carried out by the mercenary unit or part of it.
Phase: A group of operations within a mission.
Operation: A specific job undertaken as part of a mission.

Example Mission

A company of mercenaries have been hired on a striker ticket to clear insurgents from a given area. Local forces are conducting a standard cordon-and-sweep but when a significant pocket of resistance is identified they pull back and send in the mercenaries. Each clearance is a separate mission. On this occasion, orders arrive to clear insurgents from a village that is thought to contain no non-combatants. The mercenaries are unwilling to trust the local intelligence network as it has been wrong on several occasions before. The commander plans a mission to account for this, setting it up in distinct phases.

Mission: Clear Village WB-05 of insurgents.
Mission Start: Force arrives in proximity to target.
Phase 1: Hours of darkness.
Operation: Sniper/recon team establishes observation position.
Phase 2: First light.
Operation: Company moves into position on foot and awaits final go order.
Operation: Drone overflight of village and observation.
Phase 3: As determined by mission commander.
Operation: First Platoon secures building A-12 and sets up fire support position.
Phase 4: As determined by mission commander.
Operation: Support Platoon delivers RPG/mortar strike on parked vehicles at point V-1.
Operation: Second and Third platoon commence clearance of buildings.
Mission End: Force withdraws under cover of First and Support Platoons and sniper detachment.

There is no guarantee any of this will go according to plan. If the insurgents are alerted what would have been a surprise dawn raid might become a protracted firefight. If the insurgents have hostages or non-combatants in the village and these are detected by the drones or sniper/recon team the plan may have to be modified. Such is the nature of military operations and the mercenaries may well have to invent operations on the fly. However, whilst plans tend to disintegrate as soon as the enemy gets involved, the action of planning is invaluable. A force that just wanders in, guns blazing, will find it harder to obtain recruits to replace the inevitable and wholly unnecessary casualties.

MISSION PLANNING

A mission begins when the unit commander decides something needs to be done and issues some orders to make it happen. The reason for the mission might be simply the whim of the commander, or an unexpected opportunity, but commonly the mission is part of a plan created to allow the overall ticket to be completed. If the mercenaries are forced to carry out something that has the components of a mission but has not been ordered by their commander – for example defending their base from an unexpected attack – this is also considered to be a mission.

Before a mission commences the Travellers should be given the opportunity to make a plan unless events are beyond their control. It is not desirable to allow too much time for fiddling about with the details in the hope of coming up with a perfect mission but a planning session that results in a well-formatted written mission plan should be rewarded with improved performance. The same applies to contingency planning – if the Travellers have taken the time to prepare a defence plan for their base of operations they can implement it even if they are caught by surprise by an attack. A good plan is worth DM+1 on all resolution checks and in rare cases it may be worth DM+2. This only applies if the plan is sound and goes off almost flawlessly.

For example, the mercenaries have made a plan to eliminate the guards, enter the target building and snatch a high value target (HVT) before retiring covered by a blocking force. The referee deems the plan workable and grants DM+2 on resolution checks during the early phases. Things go off-script after a while, as the Travellers scramble to deal with an unexpected complication and a failed resolution check on an important operation. The plan – or rather the thought that went into making it – is still worth DM+1 on resolution checks for the rest of the mission despite the mercenaries improvising much of what they do.

Later, they are caught completely by surprise by an attack on their base where the HVT is being held. Despite the fact that comms are down and the Travellers have no idea what is happening outside their field of view the mercenaries still respond well – gaining DM+1 to their resolution checks – because they have pre-rehearsed drills to fall back on and a good idea what other members of the unit will be trying to do. Cooperation and mutual assistance is better than if everyone was just responding on the fly.

ORDERS FROM THE CLIENT

In theory, the situation is quite clear regarding instructions and orders from the client. The mercenaries have been hired and must obey their orders… but the reality is far more complex than that. A contract will normally specify who can give orders (or make 'contract-compliant requests') to the mercenaries and how the chain of command will operate. Anyone outside this chain of command has no authority to give orders to the mercenaries and they are not breaching their contract if they ignore them. However, just because someone is not entitled to order the mercenaries around does not mean they will be happy to have their orders dismissed. The unit's leader may have to smooth over all manner of incidents arising from mercenaries being 'insufficiently respectful' – which usually means obedient, although some clients expect deference and decorum that does not sit well with career soldiers. In some cases it is useful to comply with some orders from outside the chain of command, although at the same time the mercenaries must not establish a precedent. In an ideal world the solution is for the client to make polite requests and the mercenaries to comply 'as a courtesy'. Few tickets take place in this ideal environment, however.

There is also the problem of illegal or questionable orders. Clients sometimes want the mercenaries to do their dirty work for them or to use their hired professionals as cannon fodder. Some orders are legal and comply with contract terms but will place the mercenaries in a compromised position. Others are legal in terms of the agreement in place but illegal under interstellar law. The situation sometimes arises where the mercenaries are expected to quietly 'not notice' that local troops are torturing or murdering captives or even to turn them over after guaranteeing their safety.

This creates a minefield that has to be negotiated by the unit's commanders and even if they have a good working practice in place the situation can be made very awkward by individuals within the unit. Someone with a conscience in a unit that has decided to place theirs in storage for this mission can compromise the whole unit, as can someone with unusual personal views. The Travellers might find themselves facing demands to surrender some of their personnel to local justice – which is known to be corrupt and vicious – regarding offences they may or may not have committed.

Mercenaries within a unit must follow that unit's practices regarding orders from their superiors. Usually this is a standard system of punishments, financial forfeitures and possible dismissal from the unit for serious or persistent disobedience. Small units cannot afford much of a penal system and will usually fine, suspend or dismiss a troublesome soldier but larger formations may have penal units who are permitted to atone for their (sometimes frequent) transgressions by taking on a dangerous assignment. An interesting variant on the mercenary campaign might be a penal unit hired out to pay the members' debt to society.

Orders from outside the unit normally have to go through a designated officer – usually the commander but a representative may be appointed. Some clients try to micromanage their mercenaries, to the aggravation of everyone concerned. A wise commander learns how to accommodate the wishes of the client without surrendering to constant oversight but sometimes orders are given anyway.

Any mercenary receiving orders from anyone, whether they are in the chain of command or not, must decide whether to accept and acknowledge the order, request clarification, suggest a reason why the orders are unworkable, acknowledge under protest or refuse the order.

Accept and Acknowledge: This is the usual course of action for most orders, written or verbal. Standard practice is to acknowledge the order with a suitable honorific, along the lines of a simple 'yes, sir' but some units prefer complex or critical orders to be repeated back with acknowledgement. For formal orders to a mercenary commander from the client, an authenticated transmission stating 'orders received and acknowledged' and including a copy of the orders is standard practice. In the event of a dispute or allegations, it is thus possible to prove that what the unit was ordered to do and that it accepted the order.

Acknowledge Under Protest: This is a statement that the mercenary will try to carry out the orders but does not agree with them for some reason. Examples might include an order to take questionable actions such as shelling a village thought to contain civilians or to make an extremely dangerous assault that is not likely to succeed. Protesting an order does not absolve a mercenary of responsibility for carrying it out but may be used at an inquiry into the superior or client's conduct.

Request Clarification: A request for clarification is sometimes used to politely suggest that the mercenary thinks the orders are unworkable or reckless and it is prudent not to mention the fact if new orders arrive that do not resemble the original ones. Sometimes, however, a request for clarification is simply that. This may be necessitated when there are confusing circumstances the order's issuer has not accounted for

or is not aware of. Clarification may be required in a complex situation and can give the superior a chance to revise the order to something more suitable without making an issue of it.

Decline with Reason: It is legitimate to decline an order that simply cannot be carried out. This might happen for physical reasons such as the artillery ammunition still being in crates at a starport on another continent. On other occasions the mercenary may have orders or standing procedures that prevent compliance. An officer who expects an imminent air attack on their position might declare they cannot comply with an order to move out. Technically, the unit could do so but leaving its cover would expose it to debilitating casualties so in this case circumstances prevent compliance under all but the most desperate of circumstances. The decision to decline an order will be called into question, so this is not something to be done lightly.

Refuse the Order: Orders that come from outside the chain of command can be legitimately refused – although as noted above it may be wise to do so in a diplomatic manner. Refusal to obey legitimate orders is a serious offence in all mercenary units and some treat it as mutiny no matter what the circumstances.

INAPPROPRIATE ORDERS

Mercenaries have to deal with a lot of inappropriate orders in their careers. In many cases compliance is not mandatory but may be wise or greatly appreciated by the client. For example, a mercenary unit supporting local troops receives an order from a nearby unit to put down artillery fire on enemies forming up for an attack. This is an illegal order since it has not come down the mercenaries' chain of command and could be legally ignored – although the client might want to know why their forces were not supported. The battery commander might ask the overall unit commander what to do and if the order is repeated from within the chain of command then the situation is clear. Alternatively, the battery commander might acknowledge, logging a 'request' for support from local allies and comply.

In addition to coming in through an illegitimate route a set of orders can be inappropriate or problematical in other ways.

Conflicting Orders may require a unit to do something that makes its primary mission impossible. Conflict between standing orders and a specific order is one option but a more insidious one is to order the unit's commander to do something that sounds innocuous such as conduct reconnaissance in force in a particular area then order the unit to move to another location on a short time frame.

Vague or Compromising Orders do not always look questionable but along the way it will become apparent that the unit has been sent into a dangerous situation without clear guidance on what to do. A mercenary commander whose force has been hired on a peacekeeping ticket to 'be a stabilising influence and prevent the outbreak of war' between two allied powers arrives to find the fighting has already begun… and has no orders for this contingency. Or the force arrives in time to find one faction massing for a surprise attack. The mercenaries could prevent the attack but only by firing on the aggressors, which will start the war they have been sent to prevent…

Incomprehensible Orders require the unit to do something it cannot, perhaps because it lacks necessary equipment. Orders to move that are not accompanied by the provision of transportation; orders to conduct an artillery barrage issued to a medical unit… the possibilities for subtle and gross confusion are endless.

TICKET SUCCESS INDICATOR (TSI)

When a client hires mercenaries, they are a means to an end. The client wants a job done or a set of outcomes presented to them. It is rare that the means by which these outcomes are achieved is of great importance; generally a client will be happy to have their problem resolved and not all that concerned whether the enemy was driven out of the disputed territory or conducted a negotiated withdrawal. There are exceptions, of course. Sometimes a client wants to 'teach a lesson' to some enemy by inflicting a defeat or has a specific need to see tanks, not infantry, rolling into a particular location. Such criteria must be specified in the ticket if the client is to be sure they will be fulfilled. Those who fail to make clear what they want from the mercenaries may be disappointed, whereas those who over-specify might find themselves paying a much higher fee if the mercenaries agree to the job at all.

The Ticket Success Indicator, or TSI, is used to determine the client's degree of satisfaction. It takes the form of a set of criteria that are awarded differing points values. The higher the TSI at the end of the ticket, the happier the client. TSI criteria are usually apparent from the wording of the contract but tickets are not written in game-mechanic terms. It may be that the client's expectations differ slightly from the success criteria mentioned in the ticket. Usually the difference is small but some clients do not reveal their plans to the mercenaries they hire, instead placing them in a situation where the mercenary unit will

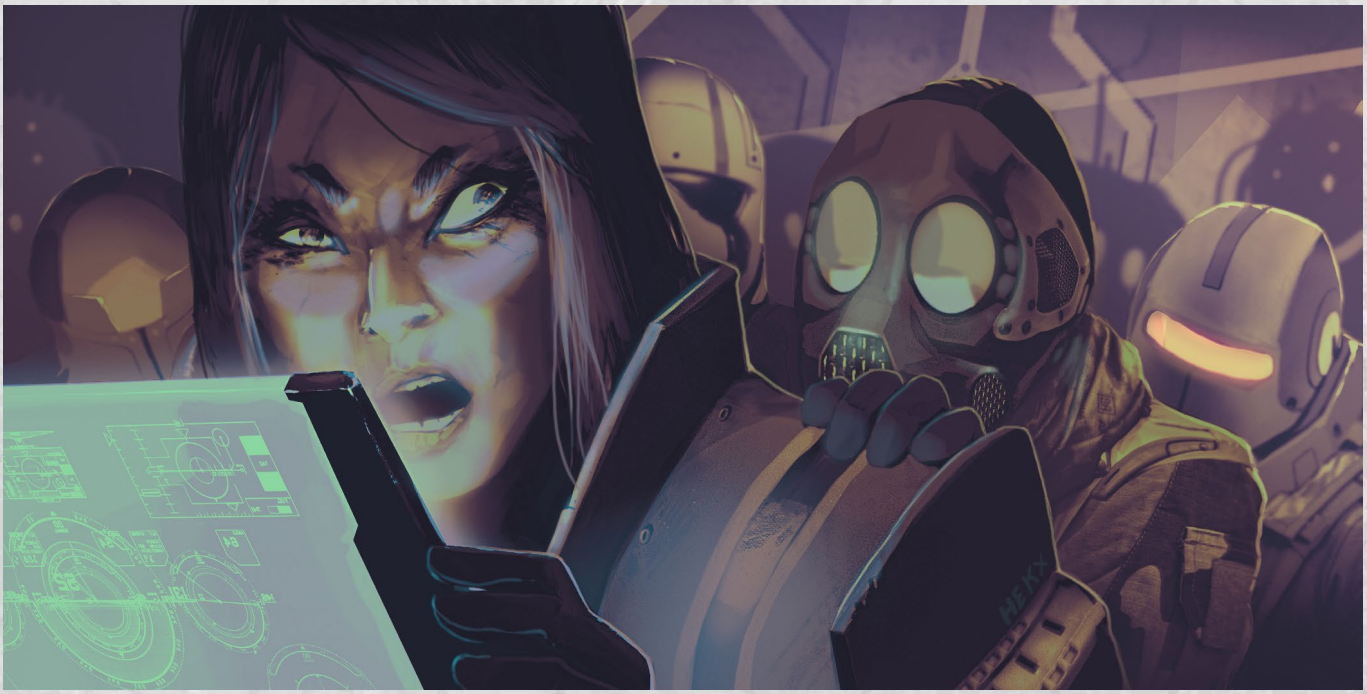
provide the desired outcome whilst trying to achieve something else. It is also possible for circumstances to force a change to the success criteria. Someone who hired mercenaries to win a war might end up being happy just to survive the ensuing disaster. If they accept the mercenary force was not at fault the client might consider them successful even if all they do is keep the client and their associates safe.

For example, a client wants to start a war between two factions on a balkanised planet. This is not explicitly stated in the ticket as the client wants to be able to deny responsibility. Instead the client hires mercenaries to undertake provocative actions under the guise of pursuing a legitimate aim. The client might choose to make their real intentions known to the mercenaries, or not. In the event that the mercenary force carries out the missions and achieves all the stated goals they can claim success and payment but the client will not be satisfied. This can create interesting situations that go beyond battlefield tactics. Suppose the Travellers figure out what is going on partway through their contract… should they just give the client what they want or cleverly honour their contract in a way that does not cost countless lives in a needless war.

On a smaller scale, the mercenaries might be given a task that seems legitimate but has an undeclared personal dimension. For example they might be sent to remove insurgents who have taken over a small town and given information on the nastiest of them in the hope they will shoot on sight or hand them over in a way that allows a deniable liquidation. Unknown to the mercenaries, one of the targets is actually a journalist who has committed no atrocities but offended the client in some way. In both these situations the client will not openly state their real intentions but may try to wriggle out of paying if the mercenaries do not deliver. A disappointed or outwitted client might also become an enemy of the mercenary unit.

When a ticket is created, the referee must determine the TSI criteria and their points value. The standard number of criteria is five, although it is possible to increase or reduce this number if necessary. A ticket can be quite straightforward and still have a full five success criteria, with most representing small additional successes. Criteria tend to be quite broad in scope, encompassing minor actions. Having large numbers of criteria suggests excessive micromanagement.

TSI should be kept as a running total by the referee and never directly revealed to the Travellers. There will be indications that things are going well or badly along the way but the Travellers should not know the exact criteria, the precise value of those criteria or their ‘score’ so far. They can figure most of this out, close enough, if they want to and this is part of the challenge of a mercenary campaign. Note that TSI criteria are for the ticket as the referee knows it will play out, not the situation as initially presented to the Travellers. There is no need to create a criterion for an event the referee knows will not happen due to a plot twist, although if the Travellers take actions that require the ticket to be re-evaluated the TSI criteria may have to be altered.



Each objective has a status: Paramount, Critical, Routine or Optional, and the degree to which it is achieved is rated as follows: Complete, Partial, Marginal,and Failed. The referee will decide how well a particular goal was achieved and award TSI points accordingly. This score might be altered if the Travellers realise they have made an error and take remedial action. For example, if the Travellers were not informed of the value of a particular individual the client secretly hoped they would capture, that secret criterion would be noted as failed and TSI points deducted accordingly. If the Travellers later figured out what had happened and launched a mission on their own initiative to grab the target the client is likely to be delighted and the criterion upgraded to a success. This is an example of how the outcome matters to the client far more than the details of how it happened.

Mission Success

Degree of Success	Meaning
Complete	The goal is fully and provably completed, with evidence in the form of reconnaissance data or observation by reliable witnesses.
Partial	The goal is more or less completed but there are a few loose ends or the evidence of completion is inconclusive. Most objectives are completed to this degree. Some clients will demand perfection but mercenaries know this is rarely achievable. With some persuasion the client will usually settle for 'good enough'.
Marginal	The objective is partially completed. For example an insurgency is seriously disrupted but not fully quelled or only some of the desired territory was seized. Marginal success is 'not quite good enough' but will be accepted by most clients unless it is frequently repeated.
Failed	A failed objective is just that. The Travellers are defeated and their attack repelled, or they fail to train local troops up to an adequate standard.

Paramount: If the mercenaries take a success-only ticket it is likely to have a Paramount objective – possibly more than one. If it is not accomplished the ticket will be considered a complete failure. Many tickets will not have a Paramount objective, although the client might talk like every little detail is of paramount importance. Very few tickets that are not success-only will have a Paramount objective, since mercenaries are professionals rather than do-or-die zealots or patriots.

At All Costs!

A Paramount objective is typically accompanied by dire warnings that it must be accomplished 'at all costs' and sometimes even quite minor objectives are phrased in this way. Mercenaries do not like this term at all – they are paid to fight and take risks, not to throw away their lives over something they may not consider important at all. A genuine all-costs mission might be undertaken for a vast fee or by a desperate unit but most commanders will politely ask if the objective is really that important. If the answer is yes, the client will need to find someone willing to die for it. Not all Paramount objectives are like this however. In many cases Paramount simply means that the whole ticket will be a failure if this part of it is not accomplished. A mercenary unit agrees to make a credible attempt to complete the ticket, not to die to the last soldier, so may have to accept that they will not get paid. This happens sometimes in the mercenary trade. Some clients will over-inflate the importance of a difficult objective then use failure as an excuse not to pay the full fee – or any of it in some cases. Avoiding this sort of pitfall is part of being a successful mercenary commander.

Critical: This objective is extremely important and worth taking severe risks for. The client considers it worth the mercenary unit taking significant casualties and is willing to pay for them to take that risk. Not all tickets have a Critical objective and very few will have more than one. If a Critical objective is assigned, the ticket overall is likely to be considered to be a failure if it is not achieved. A ticket with a Critical objective will command a higher fee unless the client is misrepresenting the situation.

Important: The primary focus of the ticket is normally one or more Important objectives. Commonly a ticket will have one Important objective and four Routine objectives but this can vary.

Routine: This is the normal level of importance for an objective. A failed Routine objective does not mean the ticket as a whole is a failure. TSI is totalled normally and the outcome determined using the Mission Outcome table.

The Ticket Success Criteria table below indicates the TSI points awarded for different levels of success.

Ticket Success Criteria

Criteria Level	Complete	Partial	Marginal	Failure
Paramount	5	3	1	–12
Critical	4	2	1	–8
Important	3	2	1	–4
Routine	2	1	0	–2

Determining Ticket Success

The maximum score possible for a ticket depends upon the objectives set. In theory it can range from 10 for a mission with only Routine objectives to 25 for five Critical objectives. It is unlikely that a ticket would ever be so important; normally a mix of Important and Routine objectives gives a maximum TSI of around 12–13.

It is possible to create a negative result if things go badly wrong. TSI should be used in conjunction with the referee's judgement where necessary; if the Travellers complete their missions and in addition deal with multiple random events thrown up by the Incident tables, they may please the client greatly but are unlikely to be given bonus payments unless the contract stipulated these. A pleased client will seek out the mercenaries' services again and may recommend them to others – and the mercenaries themselves may use their highly successful ticket as a marketing point.

At the end of the ticket the mercenary force commander or representatives of the unit will hold a meeting – which may or may not be in person – with the client and finalise the ticket. There will also usually be some form of what amounts to a debriefing. This might be with the mercenary unit commander, the client, local government representatives or even journalists covering the conflict. However it happens, the referee should arrange for the mercenaries to answer some Tough Questions about their ticket.

Ticket Outcome

TSI	Outcome
–6 or less	A debacle. It is possible the unit commander and some personnel may be subject to legal action for their actions, or that the unit will have to conduct internal disciplinary proceedings. The unit loses 1D+1 REP.
–5 to –1	The ticket was a disaster. The unit loses –D3 REP and may forfeit part of all of its fee depending on contract terms.
0–3	The ticket was a failure. The unit loses –1 REP and may forfeit part of all of its fee depending on contract terms. The unit is expected to fail in future and suffers –D3 to its TSI for all subsequent tickets until a success is recorded.
4–6	The ticket was at best a marginal success. The unit may forfeit part of all of its fee depending on contract terms. The unit is expected to fail in future and suffers –1 to its TSI for all subsequent tickets until a success is recorded.
7–9	The ticket is judged a success, although the mercenaries' performance was lacklustre and uninspiring.
10–12	The client is satisfied with the unit's performance and would recommend or hire them again.
13–15	The client is pleased with the unit performance and has a few good things to say about certain personnel or actions. MOR increases by +1.
16–18	The client gushes with praise for an excellent performance. MOR is increased by +1 and REP increases by +1.
19–21	The unit receives respect and even adulation from prominent mercenaries or officials. MOR is increased by +1 and REP increases by +1. Clever Travellers may be able to leverage the respect they have earned in future negotiations, gaining DM+1 when making checks to interact with a current or prospective client, allied mercenary units and similar contacts.
22 or more	As 19–21, plus the ticket is considered a shining example of how mercenaries should operate and is studied in training courses. MOR is increased by +1 and REP increases by +1. The client may offer rewards in the form of money, contacts or maybe a parade. This may be embarrassing rather than pleasing to the mercenaries.

Typically the referee will ask the Travellers Three Tough Questions about their mission. These can be about specific actions, such as 'you deliberately failed to inform your local support units or your liaison about your strike until you had already launched it. Please explain this decision'. Alternatively the questions might be broader in scope such as: 'Was your equipment well suited to the requirements of the ticket? Is there a piece of equipment you feel you should have had?' If the Travellers reported a spectacular success somewhere or if there are hints something went wrong, the questioning should be focussed on these events.

Each Traveller can answer only one Tough Question unless there are insufficient Travellers to answer all questions. The unit commander will usually be able to choose who answers unless it is specifically directed at someone. The Traveller answering a Tough Question must make a Difficult (10+) Leadership check with a bonus or penalty based on the referee's appraisal of their answer. At the referee's discretion Admin, Diplomat or Persuade can be used instead of Leadership, depending on the officer's position in the unit and their presentation style.

At the end of the debriefing the unit commander will make their summary comments, abstracted as an Average (8+) Leadership check (this one must be done with the Leadership skill). The total Effect of these four checks is added to the TSI to determine the client's reaction to the mission, as indicated on the Ticket Outcome table.

A simple ticket with only Routine criteria can produce a maximum result of 10, perhaps increased somewhat by a good performance at the end-of-ticket debriefing. This is entirely reasonable; a unit that successfully completes simple jobs will not impress anyone but might gain a reputation for underperforming even on an easy task if they somehow manage to fail the objectives. It is only when mercenaries face a real challenge that their true worth is demonstrated.

Example

The Travellers' unit is hired on a striker ticket by a corporation whose local interests are threatened by an insurgency. The planetary government has promised to protect corporate assets but has thus far failed to do so and the corporation has decided to take matters into its own hands. The mercenaries will be provided with as much support as the corporation can manage. They will be operating out of its manufacturing plant, which is not ideal but does allow use of the company's extensive logistics network. Supplies should not be a problem unless detachments are operating in the wilderness for an extended period.

The corporation wants its mercenaries to break the power of the insurgency, which means destroying some of its combat assets, making its regional stronghold untenable and ideally capturing some of the leaders. It also wants to send a clear but deniable message to the planetary government that it will not tolerate the current policy of promising protection then assigning forces elsewhere but has chosen not to state this in the contract. The contract does include the following terms:

1. The mercenary force will operate aggressively against the insurgents whenever targets are identified. The unit's leaders will use their discretion when selecting targets and planning operations, subject to an overall goal of crippling the insurgency such that it is no longer a threat to the corporation's holdings.
2. The insurgent threat is to be reduced to a suitably low level within 90 days of commencing operations.
3. The mercenary force will provide security and protection for the corporation's assets when not engaged in offensive operations.
4. The mercenary force will not concern itself with protecting government assets or assisting government forces in other regions. Its remit is to eliminate the threat to the corporation's holdings and nothing more.

The actual ticket success criteria are for the most part implied by the contract. The referee knows the insurgents will attack the manufacturing plant at some point and although it is not explicitly stated in the contract, protecting it is sufficiently necessary to success that the referee considers this a Critical objective. The mercenaries should be able to figure that out for themselves – they have been hired to eliminate a threat to the manufacturing plant, so allowing it to be destroyed is obviously undesirable.

Ticket success criteria are rated by the referee as follows:

1. Protect the manufacturing plant when it is attacked. (Secret, Critical)
2. Reduce insurgent activity in the region to a low level. (Important)
3. Destroy a significant amount of equipment and heavy weapons belonging to the insurgents and/or capture or kill senior personnel within the insurgency. (Routine)
4. Drive the insurgents from their regional base and ensure they stay away. (Routine)
5. Government policy towards the corporation must change, ensuring future protection and support. (Secret, Routine)

Once deployed the mercenaries find that government support is almost completely lacking. They have to gather their own intelligence or rely on what little the corporation has been able to wrangle out of government officials. Their annoyance at the lack of cooperation gradually turns to suspicion that they want the corporation to abandon its holdings. Despite this the mercenaries never really figure out that their client was hoping they would do something to change the government attitude. There is no real shift in policy and the client considers this objective failed. This is unfair, since the mercenaries did not know about it but some clients are like that. Failure on a Routine objective is worth –2 to the TSI.

The early part of the ticket is mostly aggressive patrols and sweeps of areas where insurgents are known to operate. This allows the mercenaries to gather intelligence, conduct first-hand reconnaissance and get a feel for how the enemy operates. Contacts are generally fleeting and inconclusive during this phase. Although neither side takes heavy casualties the mercenaries come off best in their encounters even when outnumbered.

It might be possible to wear down the insurgents by attrition but the client wants a result within 90 days and will not pay for over-cautious mercenaries to faff about. The mercenaries build a picture of where the insurgents are likely to be based and launch a series of strikes against their minor holdings. This allows a few senior personnel to be snatched, greatly increasing the intelligence available to the mercenaries and permitting a detailed plan for an assault on the main base to be created.

When they are ready the mercenaries launch their strike, destroying vehicles and a couple of artillery pieces as well as stockpiles of supplies and ammunition. More significantly, the insurgent leadership is made to look ineffectual, with the possibility of the force disintegrating into minor factions. The referee decides this is an excellent trigger for an attack on the manufacturing plant. The insurgent leaders have decided to stake their reputation on this assault and plan carefully. The mercenaries, unfortunately for them, were complacent and used to taking the initiative. Having failed to spot the insurgent preparations they are caught by surprise and have to fight hard. As a result the plant is damaged although the assault is driven off with heavy casualties. This triggers mass desertions and a few days later the mercenaries descend on the small force remaining loyal to the leaders and wipe it out.

In addition to –2 for the failed secret objective the referee rates the TSI score as follows.

Protect the manufacturing plant when it is attacked: The mercenaries did not know this was an objective, and nor did the client, but it is Critical to the success of the ticket all the same. It is also rather obvious that they corporation's holdings must survive. In the event, the plant suffered some damage and the client is disappointed that the mercenaries did not see the attack coming. The referee decides the client views this as Partial Success worth +2 TSI.

Reduce insurgent activity in the region to a low level: This is the main focus of the ticket and is considered Important by the client. Given the insurgency has collapsed and its leaders have been eliminated, the mercenaries are considered to have achieved a complete success worth +3 TSI.

Destroy equipment and/or eliminate senior personnel: This has obviously been achieved. As a Routine objective it is worth +2 TSI.

Drive the insurgents from their base: Again, this Routine objective has been a complete success worth +2 TSI.

The total comes to only 7 TSI, partly due to failure to alter governmental attitude to the situation. The mercenaries are surprised at their client's lack of enthusiasm but the reason that damage to the manufacturing plant was serious enough to displease the client. They have a chance to increase their total at the debrief stage, which in this case the referee decides is a combination of hard questions posed by the client and an interview for local media given by the mercenary unit's senior officers. The unit comes out of it well, successfully presenting the most positive interpretation of their actions and gaining +3 TSI from the Effect of their skill checks during the debrief. This is sufficient to bring the TSI total up to 10. The client is forced to act like they are satisfied with the mercenaries' performance despite them not getting everything they wanted.

C H A P T E R - S I X

FORCE CAPABILITY ASSESSMENT

A Force Capability Assessment, or FCA, is necessary for all units the mercenaries will face as well as their own force. FCA produces values from 0–15 in key areas: Combat, Bombardment, Aerospace and Support. These 'CBAS' values create DMs in the same manner as a Traveller's characteristics. In addition a unit's Force Capabilities include its mobility type and the size of the formation.

All four CBAS values are relative to the unit's size. A platoon with Combat 15 is still a platoon and might be in trouble if it comes up against a battalion-sized unit. However, with enough technological advantages a highly effective small unit can defeat a less effective large one. The gods of war are on the side of the big battalions, however.

CBAS values can be determined by building a unit from scratch using the rules in *Book 2*. This is not desirable for opposing formations however. Instead values are assigned by the referee to reflect the effectiveness of the force.

FORCE SIZE

The size of a unit is determined by its manning level. This will already be known or will be set by the referee.

1. Squad
2. Section
3. Company
4. Battalion
5. Brigade
6. Division
7. Corps
8. Army

Normally units will engage in combat with an equivalently sized force but occasionally a situation arises where there is serious mismatch, such as when an infantry squad is surrounded by a whole company of hostiles. It is difficult for very much larger formations to bring their full force to bear on a much smaller one, so a hugely mismatched combat will normally be a series of engagements with sub-units. The same applies when a highly advanced small unit tears through a much larger one; six soldiers in battle dress can quite probably defeat a whole TL1 army but not all at once. If, for some reason, the army did not scatter the engagement could be modelled as either a series of extremely short clashes between the battle dress squad and an endless series of company-sized units or as a single encounter over a much longer time frame.

Size classes are used rather than precise personnel numbers for simplicity. Each size class disparity imposes a DM-4 or +4 on the resolution of the combat. This represents diminishing returns – a squad of four soldiers is as overmatched by a section of eight to the same degree as a company facing a battalion, because the larger force cannot bring its full weight of fire to bear at once.

FORCE TYPE

The general type of the unit is indicated by one of its CBAS characteristics. A force intended for direct combat would be denoted as a Combat unit and will emphasise that characteristic; an aerospace defence unit will emphasise Aerospace and so on. Any positive DM supplied by the emphasised characteristic is tripled; negative DMs are unaffected. In some cases a multirole unit may be created, such as a combined aerospace defence/artillery formation with roughly equal capabilities in both areas. In this case any positive DM from either Bombardment or Aerospace characteristics will be doubled.

FORCE TECH LEVEL

The Tech Level of a force reflects its general level of equipment, including vehicles, weapons, communications equipment, boots, mess kits and body armour. Everything contributes to effectiveness one way or another, so a force with TL12 small arms but other equipment obtained on a TL4 world will not fight as well as one fully equipped at TL12. Small variations are permissible but the referee should rate the unit's TL according to its overall technological sophistication. This can mean taking an average; a force might have a lot of TL9 gear plus TL11 weapons and be rated as a TL10 force despite there being not a single piece of TL10 equipment in the force. Force TL is an indicator

of capabilities rather than a strict guide to exactly what equipment is present. Force TL provides a DM in the same way as the CBAS characteristics.

Force Mobility

The mobility of a force is not always critical to a the outcome of a battle but there are few situations where it makes no difference at all. Even when there is no opportunity to make a clever flanking movement or deep penetration raid, the ability to move reserves quickly and safely can allow overwhelming force to be applied at the critical point. Mobility is important primarily in that it dictates which tactics are not available and enables a rapid retreat from a bad situation.

Force mobility is rated according to general categories, representing the ability to overcome terrain obstacles and move fast when necessary. To qualify for a given level of mobility, a force must be fully capable of that style of movement. However, 'partial' levels are noted as they improve tactical mobility for at least part of the force. Mobility DMs are used mainly when attempting to break off an engagement or pursue a defeated enemy, although they do have some other applications.

Static

Some assets are static, such as emplaced heavy weapons. They cannot be moved and would likely be abandoned if the force retreats. If a force tries to move a static asset under combat conditions DM-12 applies to all checks to break off or pursue. It is possible to dismantle large assets and transport them but this requires considerable time and often specialist equipment.

Semi-Mobile

Semi-mobile assets can be moved but slowly and with great effort. They often require lengthy setup after moving and preparation beforehand. Semi-mobile assets include low- to mid-tech railway guns and similar huge weapons, along with aerospace missile batteries that must be carefully stowed before relocating. Semi-mobile mobility imposes DM-6 on checks to move under combat conditions.

Infantry

Infantry is the default level of mobility for ground troops. Even those carried to the combat area by train or maritime ship are still only foot-mobile once in contact with the enemy and would need to undertake a lengthy re-embarkation to retreat from the area. Infantry mobility inflicts DM-3. 'Partial' Infantry mobility is not possible.

Mechanised

Mechanised troops make use of tracked ground vehicles or heavy wheeled equivalents. Tactical mobility is good even in the most difficult terrain but long-range movement is slower than for wheeled vehicles. To qualify as mechanised a force must have sufficient vehicles of any type to carry all its personnel – which may mean some of them riding on the engine decks of tanks – and must have some heavy cross-country or tracked vehicles. In terms of the vehicle design system this means any vehicle that has the ATV trait counts as mechanised. Mechanised forces can cross difficult obstacles but their ability to move long distances at speed is limited. A mechanised force can be outrun in the open by many opponents but may catch them once they reach difficult terrain. Mechanised mobility imposes no DM on the force, but a partially Mechanised force is subject to DM-2.

Mounted

Mounted troops are made more mobile by the use of riding animals or have equivalent mobility. A force that used chariots pulled by horses or which rode in farm carts, would be considered mounted-mobile, as would a race of quadrupeds whose 'footsoldiers' more closely resemble the cavalry used by other races. To qualify as Mounted a force must have sufficient transport for all members but a unit that has enough mounts for to 50% of its personnel can qualify as 'partially mounted' if this is relevant. Mounted mobility grants DM+2 on Mobility checks in most terrain, whilst partially mounted forces are subject to DM-2. This is still quicker than Infantry in most terrain.

Motorised

Motorised forces are faster on roads and relatively easy terrain than mechanised units but lack the heavy terrain-crossing capabilities of tracked vehicles. Motorised forces are more common than mechanised ones, other than on mid-tech worlds where the likely opponents are other states of similar Tech Level. Motorised troops do not necessarily use wheeled vehicles. Hovercraft and light boats might also be used in some terrain. Motorised forces gain DM+4 on Mobility checks, with partially Motorised forces using DM+0.

Air-Mobile

Air-Mobile forces make use of non-grav air transport, which usually means helicopters or aerodynes. Air-mobile forces can move fast but do require a suitable place to land unless troops are dropped by parachute or other means. If so, the unit is considered Infantry-mobile once in place. Air-mobile forces are not common once grav vehicles are available. Air-mobile forces gain DM+6 on Mobility checks in terrain where they can operate at all, with partially Air-mobile units granting DM+2. Many air-mobile forces are reduced to operating as infantry once deployed.

Grav-Mobile

Grav-mobile forces make use of grav vehicles or personal transport devices, enabling them to operate freely in three dimensions as well as largely ignoring terrain obstacles.

To count as Grav-mobile a unit must have enough transport assets for the entire force, although partially grav-mobile forces offer some tactical advantages. Grav-mobile forces gain DM+8 on Mobility checks or DM+4 for partially Grav-mobile units.

Aerospace

Aerospace units include conventional and grav-assisted vehicles and in general, fight above the battlefield rather than on it. Mercenary aerospace units are rare but many forces favour mid-tech support or reconnaissance platforms for their cheapness. Aerospace forces are a special case regarding mobility. They cannot be caught by ground forces under most circumstances and can automatically break off from them or remain in contact during a pursuit situation. In the care where a ground unit is being chased by aircraft the Aerospace unit is usually treated as having DM+12 on any Mobility checks but may have to abandon pursuit due to fuel concerns or might lose contact if the ground force enters cluttered terrain.

Mobility Checks

In situations where mobility is a factor, a Mobility check may be necessary. This is usually an Average (8+) check using each force's Mobility DM and either ECEI or the Tactics skill of the commander, with the enemy's DMs counting against the Travellers. The outcome of this check indicates which side dictates the nature of the engagement and can have other effects besides.

For example, a grav-mobile mercenary force with ECEI DM+2 encounters a partially mounted local force with ECEI DM+1. The Travellers have a total DM+10 (+8 for Grav-mobile and +2 for ECEI) and the locals have DM-1 (+1 for ECEI and –2 for being partially Mounted).

Mixed Mobility

A unit that has a mix of transport is normally rated at the lower one but at the referee's discretion a more suitable designation may be used. For example, a case could be made for a unit to count as Mechanised if some of its personnel ride animals rather than being conveyed in vehicles, providing the main mobility type is Mechanised. 'Partial' designations can be used where the unit has a significant proportion of that mobility type. Thus a Motorised force, which contains a number of light grav vehicles suitable for tactical movements might be designated Motorised/Partial Grav-mobile. This indicates at a glance what capabilities are available to the force.

Subtracting the locals' negative DM gives the Travellers a total DM+11, making the outcome a foregone conclusion. No matter what the local horsemen try they will be easily outmanoeuvred by the Travellers' grav APCs and tanks. The Travellers are therefore in control of the battle and can decide whether to break off or pursue as they see fit.

CBAS CHARACTERISTICS

A unit's four CBAS characteristics are used, along with Tech Level, to provide a DM when resolving combat or combat-related actions. A unit with a CBAS score of 0 in a field has no significant capability in that area. A unit with Aerospace 0 has no weapons capable of significantly harming a high-flying bomber. Personnel can fire their rifles at it if they think it will make them

ART TO COME

feel better but they have no chance of harming it. The referee should not be talked into allowing a chance for a 'lucky hit' in an obviously impossible situation. However, if an aerospace asset came close enough that it might be considered to be in the unit's normal combat environment, they might be permitted to use their Combat characteristic.

Default and starting values for CBAS characteristics are detailed on the next page, along with modifiers.

Combat

The Combat characteristic is a rating of the force's direct combat capability. This includes everything from direct-fire support weapons to bayonets. It is used to assess the force's effectiveness in relatively short-range combat. Units that are intended to (or at least equipped for) directly engage the enemy will always have a Combat characteristic above 0. Even if they are reduced to throwing soup cans and punching their enemies in the face, units can usually find a way to inflict some damage.

The Combat characteristic is used to resolve direct combat between opposing forces at line-of-sight range. This includes primitive missile weapons such as longbows and infantry support weapons such as mortars. In some cases the Combat characteristic might be used when a unit engages a flying target, such as if a mercenary unit is attacked by primitive biplanes or an assault force travelling on air/rafts. These are short-range engagements and considered combat rather than aerospace defence or bombardment.

Bombardment

The Bombardment characteristic is a rating of a force's ability to deliver standoff weapons ranging from artillery to missiles. It is used when a force is beyond direct-fire range. Some weapons appear to fall somewhere between Bombardment and Combat, such as primitive black-powder cannon. However, since these weapons have a shorter range than a TL7 rifle and generally engage in line-of-sight attacks they are considered Combat assets. Larger cannon with a longer range and an indirect trajectory would be considered to be Bombardment weapons.

Many units have no standoff bombardment capability at all and so have Bombardment 0. This includes infantry equipped with short-range missiles and mortars, as these are short-range battlefield support weapons rather than true artillery. Bombardment weapons include unguided rockets, guided missiles, traditional artillery and weapons such as meson guns – essentially any weapon intended for standoff bombardment.

The Bombardment characteristic is normally used offensively, ideally to harm enemy formations without attracting return fire. However, bombardment units usually have techniques and defences intended to defeat likely attacks. An artillery unit that comes under counter-battery fire can use its Bombardment characteristic DM defensively. The same applies if the unit is attacked from short-range by aircraft or grav vehicles or by missiles. It is common for artillery units to have some air defence capability as well as decoys and other defensive systems. However, this can only be done in self-defence. An artillery unit may be equipped to shoot down an incoming missile but it is not capable of engaging the aircraft that launched it from high altitude, nor can it protect the infantry unit nearby. This is a similar situation to a direct-combat unit engaging low-flying aircraft that have ventured into its sphere of capabilities. An artillery unit directly attacked by ground forces must use it Combat characteristic.

Aerospace

The Aerospace characteristic is a rating of a force's ability to inflict damage upon flying or orbital craft. It is used when a unit engages or is attacked by aircraft, missiles or space vessels and may be applied instead of Combat when dealing with grav tanks and similar platforms. For non-specialist aerospace units the characteristic represents their ability to defend against airborne threats. For specialist units – both ground-based and flying – it represents the ability to bring the enemy to action or target their assets in flight.

Many units have no real aerospace defence capabilities beyond small arms and light support weapons, and have Aerospace 0. Few non-specialist units have a high rating; small formations normally have nothing more than a few short-range shoulder-fired rockets. Whilst larger units will usually see the need to provide for air defence, money spent on specialist vehicles comes from the budget for the unit's main field of activity and will always be a secondary consideration.

Support

The Support characteristic is a general rating of a unit's force-multipliers. This might include electronic warfare capability, advanced sensors, its command and control network and any other sources of advantage in the combat environment. Some units have virtually no capability in this area and have a rating of 0 but most will have some support systems even if it is just basic communications equipment.

The Support characteristic is used by specialist units when they carry out their function such as communications intercept or emergency battlefield medicine and also when a formation does anything

not covered by the other three CBAS characteristics. When a specialist unit is carrying out its primary function it gains the usual tripling of its DM but when doing anything else the DM is as normal. Thus if a medical unit was helping casualties it would use its tripled Support value but if asked to improvise a communications net the DM would not be tripled.

VALUES AND MODIFIERS

CBAS values reflect equipment and how well it is used. A unit that has been raised and equipped to carry out its specialist function begins with a characteristic associated with the unit's function equal to half the unit's Tech Level, rounded down. Any force that has been provided with small arms for self-defence begins with a Combat characteristic equal to one-third its Tech Level, rounded down. If suitable weaponry is not provided a unit begins with Combat 1. Similarly, a unit that has been provided with basic equipment including communications gear begins with Support 1. If little or no general-purpose equipment is provided the unit begins with Support 0. Bombardment and Aerospace normally begin at 0 unless the unit specialises in that area.

Equipment

The amount and quality of equipment provided has a significant effect on the capabilities of a unit. This is independent of Tech Level, which gives bonuses elsewhere. Secondary equipment can only be provided to one level lower than the unit's primary area of expertise. Thus a direct-combat unit with Basic small arms cannot be given Lavish artillery without changing the nature of the force. Costs are not considered here; this process is for rating a unit created by the referee as opposition or allies.

Equipment Provision

Equipment Level	Notes	CBAS Value
Minimal	The absolute minimum of equipment necessary to give a capability in the field.	If characteristic is 0, it is set to 1. Otherwise no effect.
Sparse	A small amount of equipment, or gravely substandard equipment.	Characteristic increased by +1
Basic	Cheap, low-quality or barely adequate equipment.	Characteristic increased by +2
	2	1
Standard	A standard set of equipment for the task at hand.	Characteristic increased by +3
Generous	High-quality, well-integrated equipment in sufficient quantity.	Characteristic increased by +4
Lavish	More than enough equipment, of very high quality.	Characteristic increased by +5
Excessive	Excessive quantities of the very best equipment and accessories available.	Characteristic increased by +6

Basic CBAS Values

Unit Type	Combat	Bombardment	Aerospace	Support
Combat (infantry or armour)	½ Tech Level	0	0	1 (0 if minimal or no general-purpose equipment provided)
Bombardment (artillery)	1/3 Tech Level (1 if minimal personal weaponry provided)	½ Tech Level	0	1 (0 if minimal or no general-purpose equipment provided)
Aerospace (grav craft, aircraft or aerospace defence)	1/3 Tech Level (1 if minimal personal weaponry provided)	0	½ Tech Level	1 (0 if minimal or no general-purpose equipment provided)
Support (medical, logistics, electronic warfare, intelligence and other supporting functions)	1/3 Tech Level (1 if minimal personal weaponry provided)	0	0	½ Tech level

These values are modified depending on the level of training and equipment supplied.

Training Levels

The training level of a force is applied after its equipment level. The maximum value a CBAS characteristic can achieve is 15 with all modifiers combined.

Training Level

Description	Training Level	Primary CBAS Value	Other CBAS Values
Raw and Untrained	Barely able to do their jobs, with little unit cohesion.	–2, to a minimum of 1	–3 to all values
Raw	Extremely poorly skilled personnel.	–1, to a minimum of 1	–2
Green	Low-quality or poorly trained personnel.	–	–1
Trained	Properly trained personnel.	+1	–
Effective	Highly-trained or experienced personnel.	+2	+1
Highly Effective	Elite or veteran personnel.	+3	+2

Example

Armoured Recon Services Incorporated, or ARSI, is a small unit specialising in the armoured reconnaissance and fast strike field. It is equipped with TL11 light grav tanks and armoured personnel carriers, whilst its personnel carry TL13 small arms. The unit is designated as a Combat specialist formation and since the tanks are its main striking force their Tech Level is the one that defines the unit.

The unit's tanks and fire support weapons are standard for a force of this type. It has no artillery weapons but the vehicles have self-contained electronic warfare and communications packages, which along with the unit's other equipment is rated as Standard capability. The unit cannot increase this as it is equal to the force's rating in its specialist area. Vehicles all have light aerospace defence capabilities, in the form of short-range missile launchers and gatling lasers. This is rated as a Basic aerospace capability. The unit is well trained but not highly experienced, earning it a Trained rating.

Since this is a combat specialist unit its Combat characteristic starts at half its Tech Level, rounded down or 5. Standard equipment increases this by +3 to 8 and being a Trained unit adds another +1. The force has Combat 9, earning DM+1 on checks to resolve combat situations.

With no artillery weapons, Bombardment is 0. The unit cannot conduct any form of standoff warfare. Aerospace starts at 0 for non-specialist units and is increased by +2 for the Basic equipment fit. Trained level does not add any more. This would be a very low score for a specialist force but represents a modest self-defence capability for a unit specialising in other areas. Likewise, the unit's Support characteristic is not high. It starts at 1 and is increased by +3 for the Standard equipment fit, to a total of 4. This is not bad for a unit that does not intend to compete with specialist support formations in their own arena.

Among the unit's prospective opponents is a militia armed with civilian weapons and a few stolen military small arms. This force is considered to be Raw and Untrained, has no artillery or aerospace capability and only the most minimal of support provision. The latter has been improved from civilian communications equipment and other readily available items. The militia starts with a Combat characteristic equal to half its Tech Level of 6, modified by +1 for Sparse equipment and –2 for the complete lack of training and experience. 3+1-2= 2. The unit's Bombardment and Aerospace are 0, and Support starts at 1 for minimal equipment. This should be reduced by –3 for the unit's training status but no value can be taken below 1 since 0 represents no capability at all.

CHAPTER SEVEN

UNIT CHARACTERISTICS

The CBAS characteristics are used to resolve combat but many situations occur out of contact with the enemy. Any activity on the part of the mercenary force can be resolved by playing it out using the standard *Traveller* rules. This could be rather time-consuming if the actions are complex and undertaken by large numbers of people, so most activities are abstracted. Abstract resolution normally uses Company Efficiency Index (CEI) or Effective Company Efficiency Index (ECEI) or Detachment Efficiency index (DEI) plus the Morale (MOR) of the force. Occasionally an action might be resolved in some other way, such as using the skill of the Traveller leading the action but for the most part it is the ability of the force to function as a unit that matters rather than the talents of any one individual.

COMPANY EFFICIENCY INDEX (CEI)

The Company Efficiency Index, or CEI, is used to resolve many situations that a mercenary force may encounter. It is based on an estimate of the training level and general competence of unit's personnel, modified by leadership and a number of factors arising from events during the campaign. These include incidents that will improve or reduce morale, personnel disaffection and fatigue.

CEI is rated 0–15 just like a Traveller's characteristic and can go up or down during a campaign. This can result in a force becoming more effective over time due to improved skills and confidence, or less effective as personnel become tired or demoralised. CEI produces a DM on tasks undertaken by the unit as a whole.

CEI does not usually change during a ticket. The level of competence a force has at the beginning of a ticket is what it must work with. It is possible that on a very long ticket a force might achieve a permanent increase or suffer a decrease in CEI but in game mechanics terms these factors are dealt with at the end of the ticket. Long-term but not necessarily permanent changes to a unit's effectiveness are reflected in Effective Company Efficiency Index (ECEI) as detailed on page 56.

Company Efficiency Index

CEI	Description	Training Level	Primary/Secondary Skill Levels	Task DM
0	Raw and Untrained	Barely able to do their jobs, with little unit cohesion	0/0	–6
1	—	—	1/0	–5
2	Raw	Extremely poorly skilled personnel	1/0	–4
3	—	—	1+0/1+0	–3
4	—	—	1+0/1+0	–2
5	Green	Low-quality or poorly trained personnel	1+0/1+0	–1
6	—	—	2+1/1+1	–1
7	Trained	Properly trained personnel	2+1/1+1	0
8	—	—	2+1/1+1	0
9	Effective	Highly-trained or experienced personnel	3+1/1+1	+1
10	—	—	3+1/1+1	+1
11	—	—	3+1/1+1	+2
12	Highly Effective	Elite or veteran personnel	3+1/2+1	+3
13	—	—	3+1/2+1	+4
14	—	—	3+1/2+1	+5
15	—	Legendary force formed from the cream of veterans and prodigies	4+2/2+2	+6

The CEI of a mercenary unit or any military force is based on its training level and overall competence. This can also be used to give an indication of the skill level of any individual member of the unit. On the Company Efficiency table, Primary skills refer to the main function of the unit member – typically this is the Gun Combat skill for most infantry units – whilst Secondary skills refer to supporting capabilities such as Stealth or Recon for combat troops. Specialist personnel will usually have a non-combat Primary skill such as Medic, Mechanic, Electronics or Admin, with their Secondary skill indicating combat competence.

Where more than one skill is listed, such as 3+1, this indicates additional skills from the same general category. For example a Trained infantry soldier is listed as 2+1 Primary and 1+1 Secondary. A typical member of the unit might be assumed to have Gun Combat 2 plus Heavy Weapons 1 as Primary skills and Recon 1 plus Stealth 1 as Secondary skills. The soldier will likely have additional skills but this is an indicator of their primary combat-related capabilities.

Rating a Force

It has been wisely stated that no combat-ready force can pass muster and vice versa. No matter how hard a unit tries there is always a learning curve at the beginning of a conflict – a curve often littered with unnecessary casualties. Only by engaging in conflict on a regular basis (which also causes casualties!) can a force retain its edge. For this reason the CEI of most military forces is lower than might be expected. The Base CEI table can be used to quickly determine the CEI of a friendly or opposing unit.

Note that a very low CEI does not necessarily translate to negligible fighting power. A mob can do a lot of damage if sufficiently riled up but will not be able to perform complex tasks and will probably dissipate upon meeting setbacks or taking casualties.

CEI 9+ is highly unusual in a 'peacetime' army no matter how much money is spent on training. A variety of mechanisms can be used to maintain a respectable level of readiness, such as seconding personnel to forces operating in troubled areas or getting involved in multi-government peacekeeping operations. Hiring out a part of the national armed forces as mercenaries is an accepted practice in some areas but may not be palatable to all governments. Whatever the means used, forces that have at least some personnel with experience of active deployments tend to be more effective than those that have been more or less at peace for some time. The typical planetary army, without time to ramp up training and prepare for conflict, would have overall CEI 5–6 at best, with some units a little above or below this level.

Base CEI

Force Type	Base CEI
Rabble or mob	0–1
Volunteer militia with little training	2–3
Low-readiness professionals or recently activated reservists, newly raised troops	4–5
Well trained professionals with some experienced personnel among them	6–7
Well trained and experienced professional soldiers, most mercenary units	8–9
Highly experienced professionals with considerable experience or long traditions of effectiveness in combat	10–11
Elite forces receiving lavish training and at least some recent experience	12–13

The CEI of a force can be used to resolve many situations either directly or in opposition against that of another entity. This might not be a combat operation; an attempt to unsnarl the supply chain would be a solo CEI check whilst a force that is trying to procure a shipment of ammunition at a good price might match its CEI against the equivalent rating for the corporation holding out for a higher bid.

Effective Company Efficiency Index (ECEI)

A force's Effective CEI (ECEI) is used to resolve situations that need to be abstracted. ECEI varies throughout the ticket according to circumstances and can be increased or decreased before beginning the ticket or any of its component missions. Permanent changes to CEI require long periods of training or considerable experience and are dealt with between tickets whereas ECEI can vary throughout one.

ECEI is determined at the beginning of a ticket and varies thereafter. Every time a unit suffers a crisis there is a chance ECEI may go down and it can be increased by various measures. A crisis can include one of the following:

- The force takes casualties equivalent to 5% of its starting personnel level.
- A serious setback such as the repulse of an assault or the loss of a key terrain feature occurs.
- A Leadership Crisis occurs (see Morale on page 61).
- The unit's commanding officer or a similarly important person is disabled or killed.

To avoid a reduction in ECEI the unit's commanding officer must make a Difficult (10+) Leadership check (2Dx5 minutes, INT). If the check is unsuccessful, one point of ECEI is lost and MOR is reduced by a value equal to any negative Effect.

ECEI may be increased before a ticket or at the outset of a mission. To obtain an increase of +1 ECEI, an event that can increase ECEI must occur and the unit's commanding officer must make an Average (8+) Leadership check (2Dx5 minutes, INT). MOR is modified by the result of this check and can go down if the event is mishandled.

Events that can increase ECEI include:

- Generous supply and provisioning. This is a rare and precious thing; few units ever have all they need of something and even a 'full' supply level usually involves some shortages here and there.
- Solid success that demonstrates good practice and the reliability of personnel, such as a complex all-arms operation going off like clockwork.
- A period of well-planned training or exercises lasting at least two weeks. Note that the normal ongoing training is routine and necessary for the maintenance of ECEI. Personnel need to receive training well above and beyond this level in order to improve.
- A draft of additional or replacement personnel of high quality are received.

In addition, every 2D weeks a unit is deployed (typically this means being in the field on a ticket), there is a chance ECEI may increase or decrease. Personnel may fall into an effective working rhythm and become more efficient or might lose their focus and become less competent overall.

The unit's commanding officer must make a Difficult (10+) Leadership check (INT) and apply the Effect as a DM on the ECEI Changes table to determine whether the unit remains effective.

ECEI Changes

2D + Effect	Result
0–	Morale collapses (reduce MOR by 2D, to a minimum of 0) and the force is near mutiny. ECEI –3
1–2	MOR -1D. ECEI –2
3–4	MOR -D3. ECEI –1
5–8	No change
9–11	The force gains confidence. MOR +1
12+	Efficiency and morale increase. ECEI +1, MOR +D3

Skill levels of personnel do not fall as ECEI drops, nor do they suddenly gain new capabilities. At the end of the ticket, ECEI will be compared to CEI and a check is made to see if CEI increases or decreases. In the meantime personnel have the same skill levels as previously but have become better or worse at working together as a unit.

Using ECEI

In addition to functioning as a whole-unit DM, ECEI can be used to get the force out of trouble or complete difficult tasks, representing a heroic effort. The commanding officer of the relevant sub-unit (or whole force if appropriate) must make an Average (8+) Leadership check to inspire the requisite effort. Up to three points of ECEI can be deducted in the attempt, with each point imposing DM+3 on all checks during the effort or permitting some near-impossible obstacle to be overcome.

This reduction in ECEI is permanent and represents exhaustion, depletion of resources and the sacrifice of some personnel to get a necessary job done.

Example

The Gammblin Rifles, a company-sized mercenary infantry unit, are surrounded and taking heavy fire. Their local allies have abandoned them, the grav tank is in fragments scattered all over the battlefield and ammunition is running short. Surrender would normally be the honourable option but the opposition are known for their fanaticism and tendency to murder captives.

The unit's remaining officer passes the word that she wants to make a breakout and succeeds in her Leadership check. She decides to burn three points of ECEI in the attempt, since everyone is dead if they fail. One point is spent on making a breakout possible. The referee decides that there are some civilian vehicles nearby that could be used and there is a weak spot in the encirclement. The other two points add a net DM+6 to all checks made whilst undertaking this desperate lunge for survival.

The escape is an epic tale of heroics and sacrifice. Most of the unit smashes through to the vehicles and charges to safety, leaving behind those who could not get aboard in time or were unlucky enough to be in a vehicle that was disabled. The unit lives to fight another day but is weakened by loss of confidence in its patron's other forces and by the casualties suffered during the breakout. ECEI is reduced by –3, and there may be a permanent effect at the end of the ticket.

DETACHMENT EFFICIENCY INDEX (DEI)

The Detachment Efficiency Index is used in a similar manner to CEI, for actions involving part of the force rather than the unit as a whole. At the referee's discretion, DEI can be calculated for each sub-unit and used instead of CEI for tasks involving that component of the force. This is not recommended for very large and complex situations as it will take significant time to resolve but where the outcome for different groups matters it is useful. For example, the force as a whole may do well but a platoon detached to guard a remote outpost might have a very different experience to the main body of the force.

Having sub-units with differing DEI can make for an interesting challenge when Travellers command them; a campaign where officers are desperately stealing resources and personnel from one another to ensure they do not face the wrath of a tyrannical unit commander or an unreasonable patron might be an interesting situation. A unit that has recently suffered heavy casualties or been plundered for its best personnel might present challenges for a new command team and rebuilding such a unit into a solid fighting force can be the focus of a campaign or part of it.

DEI is also used for any group of personnel pulled out of a force in order to carry out a specific task. A detachment will normally contain a leader (typically a sergeant or junior officer), one or more individuals with good skills applicable to the task at hand and additional personnel to provide enough hands and eyes to get the job done.

Subdividing the Unit

If the referee wishes to determine the DEI for different parts of a formation, it is recommended that the subdivision be along the lines of formal sub-units plus any specialist components of the force.

Example

The Gammblin Rifles has come to the end of a rather traumatic ticket and is reorganising ready for its next employment. All of its constituent platoons have suffered losses and decisions had to be made about how best to rebuild with the budget and assets available.

Headquarters Detachment: The headquarters detachment contains the commanding officer and second-in-command, a handful of clerks and runners who double as security for the command team plus communications and medical personnel. The HQ also contains the newest recruits to the force, who are gaining experience and settling in. For this reason its DEI is 7 – it is well led but not cohesive.

The HQ DEI is also used for the unit's liaison officer – who also handles procurement and administration when not on deployment – and a couple of non-combatants who are rarely with the force in the field. Their usual role is sourcing new contracts and finding suppliers of equipment when the unit needs them. The activities of these distant employees can usually be abstracted with the HQ DEI.

First (Sharpshooter) Platoon: First platoon has always been the elite of the force, and has a proud tradition of getting the job done. It does not always receive the most promising personnel but its ethos and the example of its members tends to bring out the best in those assigned. Although known as a 'sharpshooter' platoon the unit is equipped like the other rifle platoons of the force with standard small arms and light support weapons. Its DEI is an impressive 10 but its experience level was maintained by only bringing in a handful of recruits. As a result the sharpshooter platoon is about 30% understrength, at 25 personnel.

Second Platoon: Second platoon is at more or less full strength, with 34 effectives, and is armed and equipped like the other rifle platoons. Its DEI is 7, reflecting the unit's solid leadership and well-trained, modestly experienced personnel. Second platoon did not take such heavy casualties as other sub-units and has not received many new recruits. The decision was made not to strip this platoon of experienced personnel to shore up the others, although the option was considered.

Third Platoon: Third Platoon is in a state of transition. Having taken serious casualties in an earlier mission the unit was brought back up to full strength with a draft of new recruits. Most are broadly competent but the unit has yet to bond properly. The mix of experienced and inexperienced personnel and a general lack of cohesion has resulted in DEI 5, although this is likely to increase as the personnel get used to working together.

Fourth (Provisional) Platoon: Fourth platoon took very heavy casualties and some members left the unit after the last mission. As a result the formation is down to 16 effectives – just under half strength – and the confidence of its members has been shaken. The platoon has not received reinforcements and has been redefined as a reserve pool. Personnel may be reassigned to bring other platoons up to strength or the unit may be rebuilt; the company commander has not decided yet. In the interim Fourth Platoon has DEI 4. Its training and experience level are much higher but its members have not yet regained their confidence and are unsure of how reliable their remaining comrades are.

Support Platoon: The support platoon used to have a mix of weapon types – a light grav tank, a self-propelled light artillery piece and various man-portable mortars, aerospace and anti-armour weapons. Most were lost, along with some of the personnel, in the recent disaster. The remaining 22 personnel have retained their man-portable weapons but both vehicles were destroyed. The support platoon has DEI 6 and there is some talk of combining it with fourth platoon to create a more or less full-strength force with more than the usual complement of heavy weapons, or perhaps sharing out the 'weapons' personnel among all other platoons and disbanding the support formation. As yet the issue is undecided but it is certain there is no money for a replacement vehicles so the support platoon will remain diminished in capability if it continues to exist at all.

Forming a Detachment

Typically, a detachment uses the best personnel who can be spared rather than the best available, unless the task is extremely critical. For example, the unit commander would not normally weaken the aerospace defence team in the middle of a fight to provide personnel for casualty evacuation. However, bad decisions are sometimes made, or there might be a reason why critical personnel have to be pulled from their posts.

When any detachment is formed, the same process is used as when determining the DEI of a department of the ship's crew unless the referee wishes to assign a desired value.

The DEI of a detachment is based on the DEI of whatever department it is pulled out of or the unit's CEI if the detachment is put together from a mix of personnel. This value is modified by the results of the following process:

The officer forming the detachment must make a Difficult (10+) Leadership check. The Effect of this check is applied to the running total modifier. In addition, the size of the detachment and the personnel pool it is formed from will affect the amount of suitably competent people available. This modifier is not used when determining the DEI of a sub-unit unless it is being formed by borrowing personnel from other sub-units.

Detachment Size

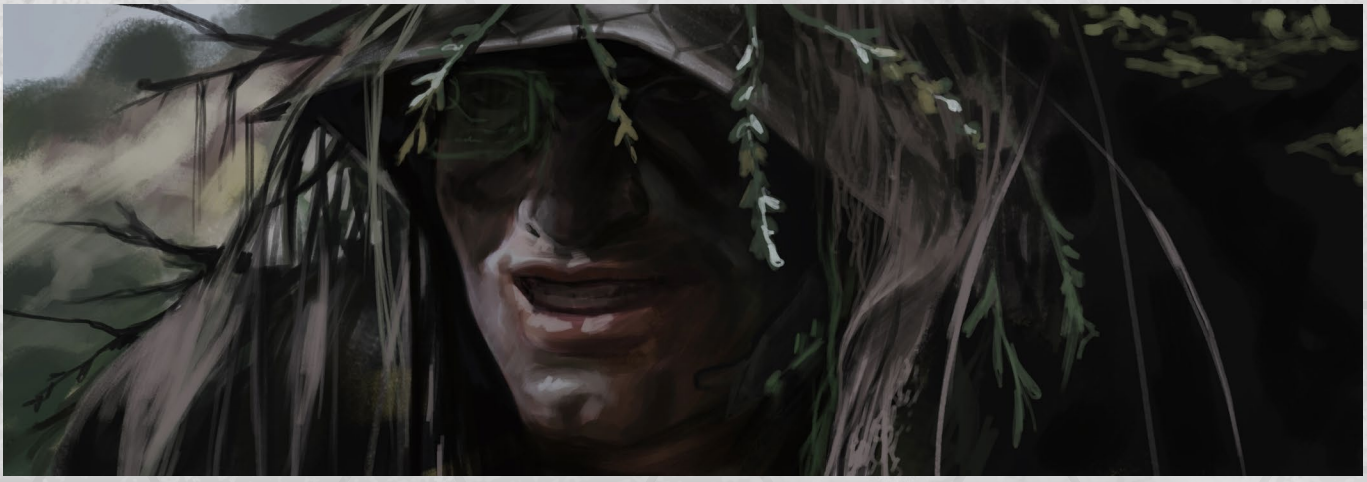
Size of Detachment	Modifier
Less than 1% of available personnel	+2
1–5% of available personnel	0
6–10% of available personnel	–2
11–20% of available personnel	–4
21–30% of available personnel	–6
31–40% of available personnel	–8
41–50% of available personnel	–10

A 'detachment' of more than 50% of the available personnel is not really a detachment at all and is subject to special rules. See Weakening or Expanding a Unit on page 60.

The Effect of the Leadership check and the modifier for detachment size are totalled, along with any of the following that apply and used as a modifier to a 2D roll on the Total DEI table.

Send the best: If the decision is made to create the most effective team possible even if this weakens the parent formation, DM+3 applies. However, see page 60 for the negative effects of this.
Anyone with a pulse: If the detachment is of low importance or the unit cannot spare well-qualified people, a deliberately weak detachment might be created. If so, DM-3 modifier applies.

The base value used to calculate DEI is the DEI or ECEI of the parent body. Thus a detachment pulled out of a larger detachment uses its DEI as base whereas one formed from the unit as a whole uses its ECEI value.



Total DEI

2D	DEI
0 or less	Base –2D3
1–2	Base –1D
3–4	Base –D3
5–6	Base –1
7–8	Base +0
9–10	Base +1
11–12	Base +D3
13 or more	Base +1D

Note that it is quite difficult to create a detachment that is more competent than the parent group but it can be done. This reflects sending only the most efficient team or using the absolute best personnel and allowing them to stand out from the average competence of their crewmates.

WEAKENING OR EXPANDING A UNIT

A unit can be weakened by several circumstances. Under-manning, casualties or a need to send off detachments to carry out various tasks can leave a ship dangerously understaffed. Whenever a unit or a detachment is subject to any of the circumstances below, it is potentially weakened.

- When a detachment is formed.
- When casualties are taken in combat.
- When sufficient personnel are unavailable for their normal duties due to needs elsewhere.
- When the force or a detachment is formed from personnel who are not experienced at working together.

Whenever circumstances arise that might weaken a unit or detachment, the officer commanding it must try to avoid a reduction of capabilities by making an Average (8+) Leadership or Admin check. The Effect of this check is added to the following modifiers and a 2D roll to determine the outcome.

A unit can also be expanded by attaching additional personnel. A unit fortunate enough to have a few extra personnel will not suffer serious problems but adding large numbers of additional troops in a short time can seriously disrupt the formation. There is also the question of unit definition. An infantry company would not normally exceed 200 personnel, by might be expanded up to 50% over the average for its type – 225 in this case since an average sized company is 150 personnel – and could be organised as a reinforced company. Beyond this the unit is too big for a company command structure to cope with. A 250-strong 'company' could be split into two manageable companies of 125 personnel or so, or redefined as an extremely weak battalion with a battalion command and support structure.

Use the following modifiers when determining the effects of weakening or expanding a unit.

If an 'A-team' detachment was formed: +2
If a deliberately weak (low-skills) detachment was formed: –2
Casualty percentage or detachment size is less than 1% of parent unit: 0
Casualty percentage or detachment size is 2–4% of parent unit: –1
Casualty percentage or detachment size is 5–9% of parent unit: –2
For each additional 5% casualties or otherwise lost personnel: -1
For each 25% of the unit's current size received in new personnel: –1
If the unit or detachment is formed from personnel who have common training but little experience of working together: –2
If the unit or detachment is formed from personnel who do not have common training: –4

The unit's command team must make an Average (8+) Leadership check, adding the Effect to the result of a 2D roll on the table below and subject to the modifiers above.

Weakened or Expanded Forces

2D	Effect on DEI or ECEI
0 or less	–4
1–3	–3
4–6	–2
7–9	–1
10–12	0
13 or more	+1

It is actually possible to increase efficiency by removing some members – typically incompetents or troublemakers – but more commonly after a reshuffle of personnel the detachment or crew will be less effective than before.

Example

A mercenary company with 150 personnel is used as the basis for a battalion-sized force formed from activated reservists and new recruits. This will bring the unit's strength up to 750. The intention is that the mercenaries will guide the new arrivals' learning process and set a good example, and when the force is ready the mercenaries will detach. This will create a combat-ready battalion with a strength of 600 personnel and free the

mercenaries for other operations – or perhaps to act as the cadre of a new force. However, this plan is not as good as the patron thought it might be.

Initially just 300 personnel arrive, all of them raw recruits. The mercenary force has CEI 8 at the beginning of the process and might actually be better off not having to suddenly accommodate 600 new members. All the same, the sudden expansion is a problem. The mercenary commander must roll 2D to determine the effect of the expansion, with DM-4 because the recruits do not have common training with the mercenaries – they come from a local army's conscription programme. The new arrivals are equal to 200% of the unit's current size, for an enormous DM-8. With a total DM-12 the result is a foregone conclusion. The commander rolls the dice anyway and with all factors combined gets 7 on 2D, modified to –5. The unit is now a weak battalion with 450 effectives. Its CEI drops by –4, to 4. If the mercenaries detach and operate without their mob of recruits, they can use their own company's CEI 8 but the battalion formed around them is a spectacularly incompetent one.

The recruits are not idiots; it is simply that too much has been attempted too fast. A couple of weeks later the mercenaries have dragged CEI up to 5, when the other 300 personnel arrive. This is 66% of the unit's current size, so imposes DM-2 on the check to see what disaster is brought upon the unit's CEI. The referee decides that since these recruits are also products of the planetary conscription scheme and have received the same rather poor training as the first lot, DM-2 applies rather than DM-4. These personnel have common training but no experience of working together – or anything else for that matter. Facing DM-6 in total, the mercenary commander makes her 2D roll and gets a 10. Modified to a mere 4, this is a reduction of –2 on CEI. The battalion is now 750 strong including the mercenaries and has CEI 3. The mercenary commander recommends that it is not combat-ready yet and begins training the recruits up as best she can, whilst her troops yearn for the day when they can go back to being an independent infantry company.

Reaching and maintaining a good level of competence, as reflected by CEI, is important to success as a mercenary force. It might even be the focus of the campaign, with the Travellers inheriting a shambles and trying to build it into an effective fighting force. Such an endeavour will meet with setbacks and unnecessary casualties but warfare is an unforgiving arena for those who are unprepared. If the Travellers are diligent and perhaps inventive they will prevail. If not, then perhaps mercenary work is not for them.

Cadre Assignments

Where a unit is suddenly expanded and expected to function as a much larger formation full of people who have not worked together before, the matter is treated as in the previous example. Cadre assignments, where the mercenaries are assigned to provide training, are a different matter. In the case of a cadre assignment the mercenaries are in a position to provide structured and planned training organised as they think best,and more importantly they are providing training to the local units. A situation where they suddenly are the unit and are expected to commence operations if ordered to do so is likely to result in chaos unless the new recruits are added in small batches with suitable orientation and in-unit training.

MORALE

Morale (MOR) is a measure of the determination and psychological resilience of a force's personnel. It is relevant not only to the Travellers' unit but also to any other forces it encounters – friend or foe. The MOR of a unit or group of potential combatants is based on its CEI, modified by various factors detailed in the table below.

Starting Morale

Force Type	Starting MOR
Fully trained professional military force	CEI+1D
Recently raised or reserve military force	CEI+D3
Motivated militia or insurgent group	CEI+D3
Angry mob	CEI+1
Armed civilians	CEI+0

MOR can be modified by up to DM+/-3 – possibly even more in extreme circumstances – at the referee's discretion. A force with a recent string of victories may have high morale, as might one that is deluded into thinking they are invulnerable by a charismatic religious leader. Depleted or dispirited units will have lower than usual morale.

MOR is rated on the same 0–15 scale as a Traveller's characteristics and creates a DM in the same way. MOR is used rather than CEI to resolve situations affecting the mood of the force.

MOR varies a lot more than ECEI during a mission. A wise commander does as much as possible to maintain the morale of the force but it will be worn down over time by setbacks and fatigue. Some events alter MOR directly, while others require a MOR check.

Morale Checks

There are two common types of MOR check and both are carried out the same way. The usual difficulty of a MOR check is Average (8+) but difficulty can be higher or lower if the situation is particularly grim or encouraging.

A Minor Morale Check imposes a loss of MOR –1 if failed. A Major Morale Check imposes a loss of MOR –1D if failed.

If not otherwise specified, a MOR check is assumed to be Minor.

Leadership Crisis

A Leadership Crisis takes places at any time MOR drops by -3 or more in the same event and when the commander of a major sub-unit or the unit's overall commander is put out of action without a clear replacement. This might occur if the ship's communications are down and orders are desperately needed even if the officers are still alive. A Leadership Crisis may cause ECEI to be reduced.

Events Affecting Morale

Morale can be affected by a number of events and circumstances, some positively but most negatively. A separate MOR check must be made for each situation that occurs.

Success

Morale thrives on success. If the unit's commander can provide the troops with a clear goal and proof it has been attained, MOR may increase by +1 or occasionally more. The goal must be something worthwhile and difficult rather than a routine operation. For example, the mercenary force is requested to carry out patrols in search of insurgent forces and has a few intermittent contacts. This is not enough to grant a MOR increase. Then an allied unit comes under heavy attack and the mercenaries respond in time to rescue their comrades. This is a noteworthy success, resulting in a chance to increase MOR. The company commander makes a Leadership check and if successful, MOR +1 is gained.

Deliberate Action

Most deliberate attempts to influence MOR are positive, such as the commander holding a parade to commemorate a victory or rewarding outstanding personnel. Rabble-rousing on the part of disaffected personnel can instead reduce MOR. Efforts of this sort normally take at least a day or two and require the use of skills such as Persuade or Leadership. For example, the commander of a mercenary unit knows there are grievances within the unit and invites a small delegation to present them to the command staff. If the commander listens and is seen to do something about the problem, they may make an Average (8+) Leadership check and if successful MOR improves by +1.

Hardship

A unit forced to suffer hardship for an extended period must make a Minor Morale check. Hardship in this case typically means poor food and lack of shelter, or being forced to operate in pestilential areas such as swamps or jungle without adequate training and protection. Enemy action is not considered hardship as such. For example, a unit is dug in on a windswept moor awaiting an attack that never comes. Food is bad and everyone is cold and wet, all the time. Every 2D days the unit makes a Minor Morale check to avoid losing one point of MOR. If left there long enough it may even mutiny or begin 'foraging' in the rear area for sources of hot food and dry blankets.

Injustice

If personnel perceive injustice, such as comrades being punished too harshly for infractions, or arbitrarily, a MOR check is required. This will normally be Minor but a major incident like the summary execution of a popular crewmember might require a Major check instead. Favouritism within the unit or on the part of a patron towards other units is also perceived as injustice. For example, the unit commander appoints a relative to a high position instead of someone the troops think has earned it. A successful MOR check indicates the unit accepts this, albeit grudgingly. Failure reduces MOR by a point. If the relative turns out to be incompetent, further problems may occur.

Recreation, Leave and Furlough

Personnel need some downtime to blow off steam or just sleep. Troops will accept that sometimes this is not possible on an active deployment but wherever possible they will expect a chance to at least carouse in a dingy army bar. Similarly, personnel will expect to be able to take a few days' leave from time-to-time, and to go on a long furlough (weeks or even months) if they need to. All of these activities impose security risks, which must be managed, and it may be tempting to lock down the unit when not conducting active operations. However, this leads to fatigue and a drop in morale.

A wise commander learns to balance recreation with security. All personnel reach a point where they need some time away from stress and military routine. Granting a furlough can mean the difference between losing someone highly skilled for a few months or having them decline into ineffectiveness, perhaps

placing others in danger along the way. Such matters are part of the day-to-day management of the unit and a situation where adequate leave and recreation is not granted will usually result in a Minor Morale check after 2D weeks. The unit may be willing to tolerate conditions for longer if there is an obvious need.

For example, a mercenary unit is working a tough urban counterinsurgency ticket and has to remain confined to a walled compound when not out on patrol. Facilities for recreation are minimal but the troops can see the need for security. The referee decides that the first Minor Morale check will not be required for 4D weeks instead of the usual 2D but after that the force must make a check every 2D weeks.

Severely Hazardous Assignments

Mercenaries accept a certain degree of risk in their duties and under most circumstances would not be unduly upset by the prospect of danger. However, if ordered into a situation of severe danger the unit must make a Major Morale check if the action seems unnecessary or a Minor Morale check if there is a clear reason why the risk is warranted. For example, the unit is ordered to assault a strongly held position immediately rather than waiting for additional support. This is extremely hazardous and might merit a Major Morale check. However, the troops know they are being sent in to clear anti-aerospace weapons that are preventing refugees from being evacuated from a collapsing pocket. The MOR check is downgraded to Minor since there is an obvious need for immediate action.

Weak Leadership

A force that has cause to doubt the competence of its officers or who witness a serious challenge to their authority must make a MOR check. This will be Minor in the case of a small challenge but an incident such as a public brawl between senior officers might require a Major Morale check. For example. the company commander storms into the mess hall to break up a harangue by disaffected elements within the unit. Far from quelling the rabble-rousing, the officer is browbeaten and ends up looking confused and ineffectual. The unit must make a Minor Morale check immediately or lose a point of MOR and there may be additional problems brewing.

REPUTATION

A unit's reputation is absolutely vital to obtaining good contracts and might even convince some enemies to retreat or surrender without a fight. Reputation is related to the CEI of a unit but how a force is perceived can vary quite considerably from its actual capabilities. Reputation is rated like most other characteristics, from 0–15 and gives bonuses in the usual manner.

When a unit first forms its Reputation (REP) is established at a value of CEI –1D, although even before operations begin this can be modified by good marketing and making it known that the unit has reputable personnel or excellent equipment. Most clients do some research before committing to a contract, so being able to demonstrate that no member of the unit has less than three years' service in a regular force or that the commander has been awarded several decorations for combat leadership can allow better terms to be negotiated or clauses to be removed from a contract. This is abstracted using the unit's REP characteristic. For rules related to REP between tickets, see *Book 2: Running a Mercenary Unit*, page 5.

Reputation can be used during a ticket in circumstances where the perceived reliability or combat capability of the force is more important than its actual capabilities. For example, the commander of a mercenary unit is trying to negotiate the surrender of an enemy unit. Local forces are not always merciful or respectful of the law when handling prisoners, so the mercenary commander offers guarantees of safe conduct based on the reputation of the mercenary unit. This allows a Persuade or Diplomat task be modified by the unit's REP DM. If the agreement is not honoured, the mercenaries will suffer damage to their reputation. This might result in them having to fight their patron's forces to protect prisoners but such is the price of pledging a soldier's honour.

FORCE CAPABILITY RECORD

Once the Force Capability Assessment has been completed and the unit's characteristics such as CEI and MOR are known, the effectiveness of the formation can be presented in a simple shorthand form. The example here is of the Second Swindonian Rifles, a TL9 infantry company equipped with some light vehicles for transportation, with no artillery weapons and only a small aerospace defence component. The unit does have a good electronic warfare capability in the form of a custom-built systems suite mounted on a grav truck but otherwise its support capabilities are lacking. The force's Combat DM is tripled since this is its primary role.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Second Swindonian Rifles	—
Unit Size	Company	—
Unit Type	Infantry	—
Unit TL	9	+1
Mobility Type	Motorised	+4
Combat	9	+3
Bombardment	0	0
Aerospace	2	–2
Support	5	–1
CEI or DEI	8	0
Morale	9	+1
Reputation	6	0

A Force Capability Record can be created for any sub-unit or detachment if this is deemed necessary. It is worthwhile creating one for a sub-unit that is regularly detached or in a situation where missions will be carried out by different parts of the parent force.

C H A P T E R - N I N E

MISSION AND OPERATION RESOLUTION

The following system allows a quick resolution of actions and tasks that will affect the course of a mission or ticket but which are not specifically combat oriented. It is possible to resolve a minor skirmish as an Operation or Mission if this seems desirable or to play it out with the standard *Traveller* rules. However, combat is normally abstracted using the rules found on page 68, or page 69 for larger engagements.

The mission or operation resolution system is one of the core mechanics for a mercenary campaign. It allows the quick resolution of actions that take place 'off-camera' or which are too complex and time-consuming to play out under the normal rules. The unit's ECEI, or a detachment's DEI, is used as a DM when resolving a situation, although some events can be narrated by the referee rather than resolving them in this manner. Such 'scripted' events are normally used to drive the plotline forward but the Travellers should not be railroaded or subjected to arbitrary setbacks over which they have no control.

For example, it is up to the referee whether the unit moving from the starport to its forward operating base is played out in detail, resolved with a single ECEI check or simply narrated in as much or as little detail as desired. As a rule, the more chance there is for something to go wrong, the more likely the referee will want to play out the scene.

For abstract resolution, an appropriate Traveller makes a 2D roll and adds the modifier for ECEI or DEI, as determined by the referee. Any additional modifiers are also applied to this check. The result is determined by the Resolution table.

Resolution Modifiers

Circumstance	Example	DM
Specialist or expert assistance is available	A local liaison officer with good knowledge of the area is with the detachment carrying out the operation.	+2
Improved equipment or lavish resources are available	The Travellers have access to a multispectral sensor package, sniffer dogs and a local guide as they search for insurgents hiding in a wood.	+1
Operation is carried out under pressure	This wall of sandbags has to be ready before the enemy gets into firing range.	–1
Operation is carried out under extreme pressure	The enemy is just within firing range and is taking potshots while they wait for their tanks to catch up.	–2
Distractions	The embedded news crew are getting in the way again.	–1
Difficult circumstances	Comms are down, visibility is poor, scared refugees keep running through the unit's position and enemy snipers are targeting anyone who so much as sticks their head up for a look around.	–3
Reluctance	At least some of the unit's personnel have lost confidence in the command team or their own ability to succeed and are reluctant to enter a fight they expect to lose.	–1
Internal Divisions	Some elements of the force or nearby allies are on the brink of mutiny and will ignore orders they disagree with or even openly challenge them. Support is unlikely to be forthcoming.	–3

Multiple factors can apply but the referee should be cautious about making things too easy for the Travellers. If they are allowed to claim several advantages every time they do anything the actual competence of their force (modelled by ECEI) becomes meaningless. Note that most tasks will be at least partially completed, although often in a way that causes additional problems. For example, if a squad of mercenaries is supposed to enter a building and clear it of insurgents and the result is a complete failure, they may not even get into the building. On the other hand, partial success could mean they clear the building but take casualties, or that they are in control of most of the building, with a couple of insurgents at the top of the stairs shooting at anyone trying to get at them.

Levels of success are for the guidance of the referee when narrating the outcome of the operation. Exactly what 'partial success' or any other result means will depend on what the Travellers were trying to achieve.

IMPROVING PERFORMANCE

CEI checks differ from skill checks in that they represent a team effort making use of a great many skills. Such activity could perhaps be modelled using a truly gargantuan task chain but even then there are factors that would not be represented. These include the ability of the force to work together and the overall competence level of the personnel involved.

Most CEI checks produce a positive outcome, in that the job will get done. However, a unit with a mediocre CEI or ECEI will perform their tasks in a sloppy and less-than-effective manner. This does not mean that everything has to go wrong in grand style. An Incident or Mishap indicated by the CEI check outcome can be minor or trivial; something reported as a footnote about the operation rather than a crisis the Travellers have to deal with. A string of such minor incidents should alert the Travellers to the fact that their unit is not performing as well as might be hoped.

Resolution

2D	Outcome	Details
0 or less	Complete Failure	The task was a fiasco and was not completed. A Mishap occurs.
1–2	Failure	The task was begun but dissolved into chaos and remains incomplete. A Mishap occurs.
3–4	Minimal Success	An obviously poor performance which embarrasses the unit, but the detachment was more or less able to stumble through to the end of the task. An Incident occurs.
5	Partial Success	A sloppy performance but maybe nobody saw the mistakes. Roll 2D; on 10+ a Mishap occurs.
6	Success	The job got done but there was an Incident.
7	Success	The job got done. Some commanders will be satisfied with this level of performance; some would be relieved that it went off OK.
8	Solid Success	A decent job, with room for some lessons learned. However, an Opportunity occurs during the operation.
9–10	Solid Success	A solid performance, good enough to satisfy even a critical observer.
11–12	Impressive Success	A textbook performance. Roll 2D: on 12+ the detachment or parent unit gains MOR +1.
13–14	Impressive Success	Near-perfect resolution, as good as anyone would expect in an exercise. Roll 2D; on 10+ the force gains MOR +1. An Opportunity occurs.
15 or more	Perfect Success	Everything goes perfectly or even better than that. Newer members of the unit are given a chance to try out their skills in a 'live' situation and even they perform brilliantly. Anyone watching would think this was a staged propaganda film. Roll 2D; on 8+ the unit gains MOR +1. An Opportunity occurs.

One solution to this is to find ways to increase ECEI but this is a long-term undertaking and may not be possible under the current circumstances. The alternative is for the Travellers to create favourable circumstances for the task. Lavish equipment or expert advice can be simply factored into the CEI check as a modifier but additional DMs are available if the Travellers find a way to make use of their skills.

This will usually require a mini-adventure. For example, rather than simply abstracting a sweep for insurgents as a CEI check, the Travellers decide to roleplay it out a little. The unit commander gives some orders, other officers liaise with local forces and the leaders of nearby communities and the referee calls for a Tactics check from whomever is in charge of the forces on the ground.

A well set up mission will gain the Travellers DM+1 or at most +2 on their CEI check, providing their skill checks produce a positive outcome. The mini-adventure is played out using the normal Traveller rules, after which the scale changes back to whole-ship operations using CEI and ECEI.

NOTES ON RESOLUTION

Any mission or operation can be expanded into an adventure or the resolution system can be used to abstract everything that happens on a mission; however, the latter is best suited to a solo game. A referee can use the resolution system creatively to generate impromptu adventures that will test the Travellers' skills. Some may be 'mini-adventures', short scenes to be played out in a few minutes, whilst others can be quite lengthy.

Mission or operation resolution can generate adventures in a variety of ways. For example, the referee might resolve the activity then present the Travellers with the situation as it unfolds – an adventure happening whether or not they want it to – creating a situation for them to deal with based on the outcome indicated. If this approach is taken the Travellers may be able to alter the outcome of the situation for better or worse. Alternatively, the Travellers might be presented with a report on how things went and then have a mini-adventure as they question those responsible for the fiasco in the hope of determining just how it all went so badly wrong.

The Travellers will often delegate tasks and thus lack direct observation on how they were carried out. This can create interesting situations in which they have to sort out the aftermath without concrete information. For example, the referee rolls to resolve a routine patrol, smiles cryptically and informs the Travellers that the junior officer in charge of the patrol reports a successful mission with no incidents of note. A little later a comms operator informs the Travellers that the mayor of the local town is requesting an urgent conference regarding the behaviour of armed mercenaries in a local bar. Clearly something is afoot but sorting out exactly what might be a challenge.

Note that the resolution system is intended to give the referee an indication of how things went. The Travellers may not be so certain; things look okay but something could have gone wrong or an apparent shambles might have resolved itself in the end. The referee can always decide that the dice rolls are all there is to an incident and likewise always has the option to expand an operation or create an entire adventure from the results.

INCIDENTS

An Incident occurs when indicated by the mission and operation resolution system. Most Incidents are negative, reflecting the fact that the simplest task can go awry. Incidents normally occur during the resolution of an operation and are noted at the scale of a detachment or small segment of a unit. Incidents involving the whole force can be scaled up to match the situation.

Incidents are spurs to adventure or at least short challenges that will keep the Travellers thinking. For example, an Incident occurs as a detachment makes a patrol and suddenly the Travellers have a request for guidance from the patrol leader. Apparently a local force is insisting the mercenaries are somewhere they should not be and are trying to detain them. The mercenaries will not relinquish their weapons and an armed standoff has begun. The Travellers are going to have to be diplomatic or perhaps bring reinforcements and negotiate from a position of overwhelming strength. What if that precipitates a shooting incident? How will that affect the ticket?

Incidents

2D	Incident
2	Something goes suddenly wrong with a piece of equipment. Failure is unlikely and the timing is as bad is it could possibly be. That suggests deliberate sabotage but there is no immediately obvious suspect.
3	A routine task turns complicated or dangerous, fast. This may be hostile action such as a band of insurgents making an attack or escape, or could be a passive threat such as hazardous terrain or an unmarked minefield. It might be a threatening situation that stops short of violence, such as belligerent protesters or an 'unfriendly-but-not-enemy' force making provocative actions.
4	A member of the unit suffers serious injury due to inattention or equipment failure. If an interaction is taking place with outsiders the incident might be misconstrued and result in confrontation.
5	The situation is complicated by the arrival of a local official or another force, which begins interfering or behaving in a suspicious manner.
6	A newly promoted or transferred junior leader decided to take charge and get things done. This irritates more experienced personnel who have established a good working practice… or maybe they are just set in their ways and resent being asked to make a proper effort.
7	Confusion reigns! Garbled orders and bad information result in the mishandling of simple tasks. A patrol might get lost or stray into the wrong area; vehicles get stuck or develop faults due to poor maintenance. The mercenary force will appear embarrassingly incompetent. The job more or less gets done, however.
8	A dispute breaks out over necessary equipment or a key member of the unit whose skills are wanted in two places at the same time. The resulting bickering derails the task at hand.
9	Important and possibly irreplaceable equipment is missing or inoperable. Unless a workaround can be improvised the task cannot be completed.
10	The detachment reports the job done in double-quick time. They may have actually achieved that or might be cutting corners.
11	A complex task turns out to be extremely easy. Suspiciously so, in fact…
12	An ordinary member of the unit has a moment of sheer brilliance and displays hidden potential. The task goes off exceptionally well but why has this unremarkable soldier suddenly come to the fore?

MISHAPS

A Mishap is more serious than an Incident and will always be negative in nature. Where an Incident will usually lead to fairly minor events, a Mishap has the potential to become a serious incident. When a Mishap is indicated the referee should roll 2D on the Mishaps table and extrapolate the details from there.

Mishap

2D	Outcome
2	Casualties are taken. The unit suffering the mishap loses 2D% of its personnel or equipment. Most casualties will be relatively minor injuries or could indicate personnel who have become lost or detached from the unit for a time.
3	A vehicle or piece of equipment belonging to the unit is involved in a minor collision or serious breakdown or causes a similar incident to happen to the property of local authorities or another mercenary unit.
4	A major piece or group of equipment has developed a fault or taken damage that makes it erratic. For example, the targeting system of the unit's artillery battery or the gravitic drives of its tank. Impose DM-1 on all checks involving that system until repaired.
5	One of the unit's minor systems, such as a vehicle or heavy weapon, suffers a malfunction and is out of action until fully repaired.
6	A unit member is seriously injured, requiring investigation.
7	A unit member suffers a minor injury, which may well be his own fault.
8	A unit member causes injury to someone outside the ship's company, creating a possible additional Incident.
9	A unit member manages to insult or offend someone important.
10	A nearby unit, installation or civilian community suffers a disaster and requires assistance. The Travellers' force is close enough to respond and would need a good reason not to, even if it will interfere with their current mission.
11	A communique arrives demanding an explanation for something the Travellers have (or have not) done. How legitimate the demand is depends on who is making it. The Travellers may or may not have given cause for the situation but will have to explain themselves to an unreceptive audience.
12	The Travellers' intelligence staff obtain information that makes them suspect most of their mission or even ticket briefing is based on faulty data. A thorough re-examination of all available information is required, which will take several days to complete. Until the incorrect information is identified and purged, all missions and operations (other than direct tasks such as weapons fire) are subject to DM-2.

Mishaps should always be expanded into an adventure unless there is a good reason not to. In many cases, the Travellers will become aware of the Mishap after it has occurred and have to deal with the outcome. For example, if a batch of faulty ammunition is discovered, the Travellers will most likely learn about it in a report from the logistics officer after the situation had been resolved. If the fault was serious enough to take the artillery battery out of action the Travellers are likely to be informed immediately.

Depending on how the Travellers treat their subordinates, personnel involved in a Mishap might try to conceal the fault and fix it without anyone knowing – especially if negligence was involved. In some cases, perhaps a low-morale unit whose command team are harsh on those they blame for failure – the fault might go entirely unreported and only come to light much later… maybe in the middle of a battle.

Much depends on how the Travellers treat their personnel and how motivated and professional they are. This is indicated by the ship's CEI and the general culture of the fleet it belongs to. In some forces the 'vertical stroke' falls upon everyone above the perpetrator of a mistake – or the person who gets the blame – regardless of how fair or unfair this may be. In such an environment, blame-deflection may be more important than fixing the problem, which in turn creates an atmosphere of paranoia and mistrust among the crew while officers conceal their subordinates' shortcomings and try to avoid censure rather than doing a good job and being honest when something goes wrong… there are always personnel like this in any navy. Thus a Mishap might go unreported for a time, then suddenly become critically apparent when something else is going on.

OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities generally arise unexpectedly in the course of a mission or operation. Sometimes they are direct consequences of the actions taken by the mercenaries but it is not uncommon for the situation to be accidental. For example, the mercenaries attack an enemy unit just as a courier arrives with detailed plans for a forthcoming major offensive. There is no way the Travellers could have predicted the courier's presence. Of course, some of these 'lucky finds' are actually attempts by the enemy to plant false information. Opportunities are thus a good way of keeping the Travellers from realising what they have just accidentally found out is too good to be true.

Opportunities

2D	Outcome
2	The Travellers obtain a lead on an intelligence windfall, such as a high-value enemy officer or the location of a document cache. If the lead can be successfully followed up, significant advantages will be obtained.
3	During the operation the mercenaries encounter a person who asks for refuge with them. This may be an escaped prisoner, a foreign notable fearing for his life or a friendly intelligence operative needing to make a quick exit. The presence of this person will be an inconvenience for the Travellers but will bring advantages later in the ticket.
4	The Travellers become aware of an equipment cache or a friendly group willing to support their mission. This might be in the form of information, hospitality or supplies. Something as simple as fresh meat and fruit could raise morale after weeks of preserved rations.
5	A piece of highly useful data is obtained. The Travellers may 'cash in' this find at a later date, in return for information from the referee or a bonus to resolve tasks during a mission.
6	Routine intelligence-gathering produces a lead on some minor threat such as the haven of a small insurgent group or enemy covert recon detachment. With some additional investigation the Travellers may be able to locate it.
7	The Travellers encounter a friend in an unexpected place, such as a retired former colleague in a new job. The old friend is probably willing to help out but may need something in return.
8	An allied unit arrives unexpectedly and is in a position to help out or support the Travellers for a few weeks.
9	A supply shipment arrives with a draft of additional personnel. This might be a mixed blessing, since they will have to be integrated mid-mission but among them are some talented people or replacements for missing personnel.
10	The Travellers are made aware of a weakness among their rivals or enemies. This might be a habit of always using the same tactics in battle or some piece of 'dirt' that can be useful in influencing the target. When used by the Travellers, the intel gives them DM+2 for one mission against one specific target. It can only be used once.
11	A piece of equipment in use by Travellers' or their allies turns out to be a non-standard variant with additional functions. These were not a great success and were not integrated into future designs, which means that few people know about them. On one occasion when the Travellers face a technical problem (for example, inability to resolve critical signals-intelligence data) this capability provides a solution.
12	A non-Traveller, older than most personnel of their rank, turns out to have had a very respectable academic career before they became a mercenary. Their long-disused knowledge of obscure alien art, dead languages or weird weather phenomena can be defined at any time the Travellers want, providing a solution to an otherwise difficult situation.

Like Mishaps, Opportunities are just begging to be expanded into adventures. They tend to be less immediate in nature, however. In some cases, the opportunity is something the Travellers become aware of and can choose to follow up or use to their advantage at a later date. In other cases, the opportunity might not present itself straight away. For example, the table indicates that a person asks for refuge with the Travellers' unit… but they are in the middle of crossing an airless moon. The referee might decide they stumble upon an escape pod containing a single survivor in an emergency low berth and, once revived, the survivor turns out to have useful information. Alternatively, the referee might file the opportunity for the present and implement it when the Travellers are somewhere it can plausibly occur.

TICKET EVENTS

Events that occur between tickets are generally 'campaign events', in that they are significant to the progress of the campaign as a whole. Those that occur during a ticket or one of the missions associated with it are usually of smaller significance but can still complicate a ticket. This in turn can affect the progress of the campaign, especially if a critical ticket goes better or worse than expected.

Almost any event the referee can conceive might happen in the course of a ticket but care should be taken before imposing anything that might be setting-changing. The collapse of a planetary government may have significant implications beyond the immediate mercenary ticket; it will create a power vacuum that might lead to more employment for mercenaries but also disruption to interstellar trade and possibly the all-important supply chain.

The following events are intended as a starting point for the referee's imagination. There is no reason why an event cannot be repeated or why it will play out the same way each time. Ticket events can be inserted at any point the referee sees fit, and can vary in scope and severity.

Communication Breakdown: Communications or relations with the client break down to the point where the Travellers do not know what is going on. Alternatively, the client organisation or government might collapse, leaving the Travellers wondering if their contract is still valid. An extreme version of this event might see the Travellers stranded without supplies but denied permission (or not granted it due to communications difficulties) to sort out the problem themselves. Attempting to withdraw might be a violation of the contract if it is still in force and could result in conflict with local forces.

Deception: The Travellers might have been deceived about their contract. Perhaps the nature of the enemy is concealed from them or the situation is misrepresented. Alternatively, the Travellers might be collateral victims of an entirely unrelated piece of deception. For example, an arms broker might have hired mercenaries (perhaps even the Travellers themselves) to stir up trouble in the hope of making sales. Multiple layers of deception are possible, creating a highly complex situation for the Travellers to resolve.

Disease in the Camp: Mercenaries tend to be careful about local diseases and are generally immunised against common afflictions at regular intervals. All the same, it is possible for a unit to be affected by local disease, especially if operating in unhealthy terrain such as jungle or swamp. Alternatively, the Travellers might be largely immune to a disease that is wreaking havoc in the local area. They might be called upon to help, outside their remit, or find themselves in the position of being the only able-bodied and organised people around. What they do with that opportunity – or responsibility, depending on how you look at it – is up to them.

Embedded Personnel: The Travellers' unit is assigned observers, a news crew, a liaison team or some other embedded personnel and then told to get on with business as usual. The embedded personnel might be well-meaning but clueless or may have an ulterior motive such as obtaining evidence that can be used to void the mercenaries' contract.

False Alarm: One of the other ticket events appears to be unfolding but it turns out that intelligence reports were wrong or the event is so minor in scope as not to matter in the grand scheme of things. The Travellers might over-react to a situation they think needs decisive action, rerating additional problems for themselves.

Friends in Strange Places: The Travellers encounter members of a unit they have worked with before or corporate officials with whom they have good relations. Whilst this might just be a chance encounter, it is strange to meet these people here, at this time. The Travellers may need to investigate the situation but risk offending their friends.

Modified Orders: The Travellers' orders are suddenly revises or they are sent some additional equipment without explanation. This might be a genuine snarl-up or circumstances may have unexpectedly changed. The situation may require a rethink of the current deployments it. In this case, the referee must decide whether to generate a new set of mission success criteria or watch the Travellers scramble to accomplish everything expected of them.

Request for Assistance: A world government or organisation requests assistance in a matter that would normally be outside the unit's remit, such as providing security for government installations during serious unrest. Alternatively, the mercenaries might have a problem dumped on their doorstep. An example might be the arrival of several truckloads of refugees at the mercenaries' base, accompanied by escorts or local officials who make themselves scarce in short order. The mercenaries are not required by their contract to look after these people but refusing might cause other problems. On the other hand, the situation could be a ruse to infiltrate the mercenaries' secure area or place them in a compromised position.

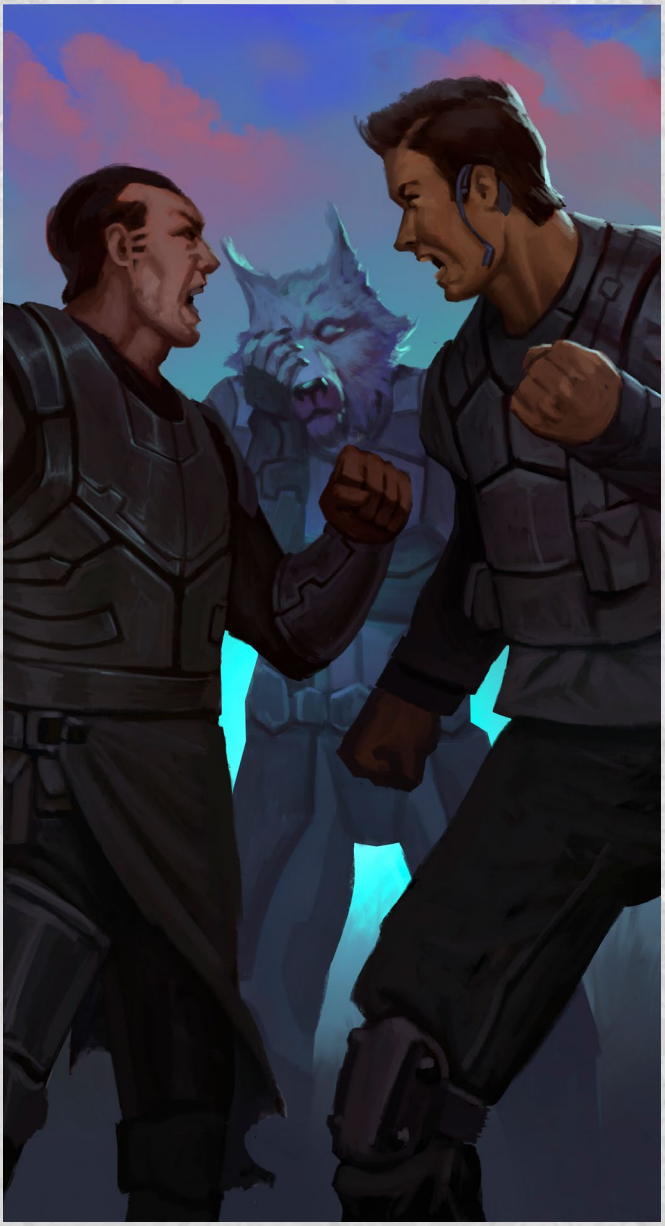
Third Party: The local situation becomes more complex as additional factions emerge or the patron government fragments. Exactly who is the enemy and who can be relied upon become difficult questions to answer. Alternatively, other mercenary forces might enter the equation. These might be allies who are rivals or who the Travellers have a history of conflict against or enemies who are former allies.

Quagmire in the Making: Cross-cutting agendas result in additional complications for the Travellers. A world government, a sometimes-friendly faction among the population and a major corporation all have fingers in the local pie and are influencing local officials to support their viewpoint. The Travellers' orders are repeatedly changed or influence is brought to bear on them as different factions come to the fore.

Supply Shortage: The supply situation is worse than the Travellers thought. Perhaps some of their stores are damaged or spoiled, or a supply shipment fails to arrive. Alternatively, the shortage could be caused by orders to transfer supplies and ammunition to an allied unit. A straight refusal to do so might be legal within the terms of the contract but will cause friction among allied forces at a time when the mercenaries really need to be able to rely on them.

Under the Microscope: The Travellers are rather suddenly informed that their unit is to be visited by a high-ranking officer or important official in the client government or perhaps by a peacekeeping or oversight agency. Whatever the specifics may be, the activities of the unit to date and what they do whilst they are under scrutiny, will be carefully examined. This might be an inappropriate intrusion by a busybody or local government that does not really have the authority or could be mandated by the mercenaries' contract. The Travellers are expected to be polite no matter how annoying these people get and may be expected to 'put on a show' or grant access to equipment and facilities they would rather not. There is always the possibility that the visit is a cover for something else, perhaps a briefing for a top-secret mission or request to take care of a problem 'off the books'.

Unrest in the Ranks: A series of minor incidents escalates into a serious morale problem or internal dispute between sub-units or personnel within the unit. The cause might be a mistake made by someone, which led to consequences for another group or it might be simple troublemaking on the part of disaffected personnel. By the time it comes to the notice of the Travellers, the matter is quite serious and has started to affect efficiency. Alternatively, an officer might be at odds with their subordinates with similar effects.



CHAPTER TEN

RESOLVING COMBAT

Combat is an occupational hazard for mercenaries and the heart of a mercenary-themed *Traveller* campaign. Any combat situation can be played out using the standard *Traveller* rules if this seems desirable. It is possible to abstract a large-scale encounter, then play out a part of it as an adventure. This might not involve any fighting; other activities can take place against the backdrop of a battle. For example, the Travellers might be involved in evacuating casualties from an endangered field hospital whilst a firefight rages nearby.

The referee has the option to script combat situations, especially where the result is a foregone conclusion or if the outcome is necessary to the campaign storyline. This must be done judiciously, as Travellers who have no control over their fate are likely to become disaffected. Wildly inappropriate results thrown up by the vagaries of the dice can be toned down at the referee's discretion but heroic one-tank rampages have happened in history. Unless the outcome is obviously impossible it may be better to retain it and impose some explanation for the sudden collapse of an apparently invincible force.

Combat in a mercenary campaign must be resolved in a certain amount of detail, since casualty levels and degrees of success have long-term implications for a unit. A force that wins its battles through brute force may have trouble replacing casualties after a while, whereas one averse to losing expensive equipment might not get results quickly enough for its clients' liking.

Combat is resolved over a series of phases. A short encounter or surprise raid on a single building might be over in just one combat phase but more commonly an encounter with enemy forces requires the accrual of advantages until the opposition retreats or surrenders.

The process for resolving combat takes into account the tactics chosen, the skill of the opposing commanders, tech level of the forces involved and their combat capability. Resolution moves through a series of phases until one side or the other decides to break off or surrender, or is defeated.

1. Reconnaissance and Intelligence Phase
2. Preparation Phase
3. Initial Combat Phase
4. Subsequent Combat Phases
5. Resolution Phase

The Travellers are the Focus… Except When They are Not

A mercenary campaign is about the Travellers and their unit. Whether they are attacking or defending, whether they are ambushed or working to a detailed plan, they are the focus of combat resolution. The resolution system is built with this assumption in mind. If a combat between two forces not commanded by the Travellers is to be resolved, the same system can be used but the question of whose point of view resolution is to be carried out from must be answered.

The referee is free to choose and circumstances will often suggest which side is most appropriate as the focus. Usually this will be the side that has the initiative, which generally means the attacker. However, in an encounter battle or a scrappy engagement made up of fleeting contacts this may not be clear. A good rule of thumb is to resolve the action from the point of view of whichever side the Travellers are most likely to get good information from. Resolution can produce quite a lot of detail, which the Travellers are more likely to learn from allies than from enemies. However, if the outcome is all that matters either side can be the focus.

RECONNAISSANCE AND INTELLIGENCE PHASE

Before an action begins, the commanders on each side have an opportunity to obtain information and decide how best to act upon it. Many commanders, especially amateurish militia leaders, do not do so and blunder in guns blazing. This can occasionally gain them surprise but more often leads to an ambush or disastrous head-on attack against a prepared opponent.

During the Reconnaissance and Intelligence phase, the Travellers should be presented with what information they have and – usually – be given an opportunity to obtain more. In a situation where the mercenaries are attacked by surprise they will not have the chance to send out patrols or call for drone overflights but will still be able to call upon information they already have.

In the Reconnaissance and Intelligence phase the Travellers should resolve an Intelligence Event (see page 36) and apply the results to their Tactics checks throughout the engagement. If the Travellers have been specifically gathering intelligence on the force they are engaging or its parent formation they may already have resolved an Intelligence Event on the subject. If so, they may use the better of the two results. Normally this will occur if the Travellers have been diligent in their intelligence gathering, which might mean cultivating contacts or assigning intelligence staff to analysing enemy capabilities. Those who fly by the seat of their pants must resolve an event at the beginning of the engagement and simply hope that they know enough not to land themselves in trouble.

If combat is imminent, there is no chance to obtain further information and the engagement moves to the Preparation phase. The Travellers may choose to do so even if there is time, but in many situations a final reconnaissance can be undertaken. For example, if a strike team is in place ready to enter a compound held by enemy militia but has not been detected, the mercenaries might wait a short while for a drone overflight or information relayed by an observation team.

When a final reconnaissance is carried out in the face of the enemy it is usually by technological means such as drones, electronic sensors and the like, or by a stealthy direct observation by personnel. Reconnaissance is not always covert, especially when there has been previous combat. The enemy still might not realise they are being reconnoitred for an attack. For example, if skirmishing has been ongoing for days, the enemy might not realise that the goal of a particular fighting patrol was to locate their heavy weapons positions.

Reconnaissance Detection

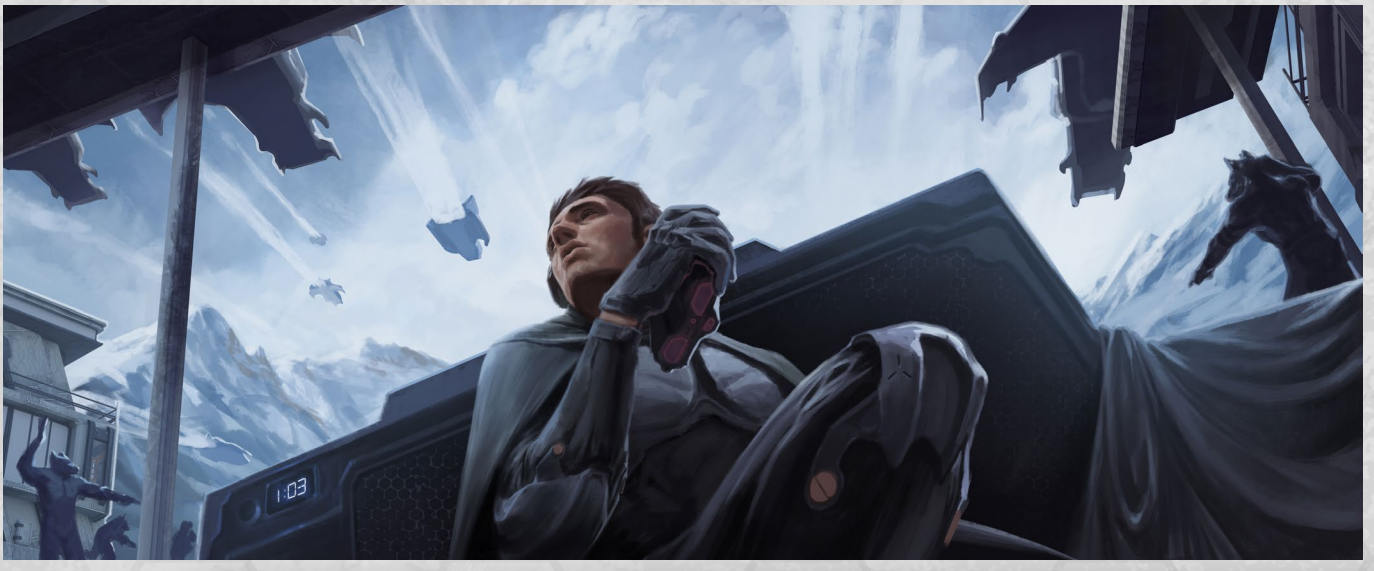
To realise a reconnaissance is taking place rather than normal activity the target must pass a Routine (6+) CEI check. The difficulty is increased to Average (8+) if one of the factors below is in place and to Difficult (10+) if more than one is in place. The same process is used by the Travellers if they are being observed prior to an attack.

- Stealthy or covert 'human intelligence' such as an undetected patrol, scout snipers observing and reporting back or an operative pretending to be an innocent civilian observing the target.
- Use of sensors the enemy cannot or fails to detect, such as laser microphones and thermal cameras against a TL3 enemy who has never heard of them or against an enemy not taking suitable precautions.
- Use of stealthy sensor platforms or long-range sensors operating from beyond the range of enemy detection.

For example, the mercenaries have slipped a scout sniper team into position to observe the target. This might end up being a mini-adventure in its own right, as might extracting the team, but once they are in position they can observe the enemy, who has no idea they are there. Their sensor equipment is not fancy but the enemy is complacent and fails to take precautions. With two factors in place the enemy's chance to detect the reconnaissance is Difficult (10+).

Reconnaissance Outcomes

A successful final reconnaissance allows a modified Intelligence Event to be resolved. The intelligence officer of the force makes an Investigate check as normal, with DM+2 if the reconnaissance was not detected. The referee may award additional DMs if the Travellers planned and executed their final recon well. Those that prefer to rely on abstracting such matters cannot expect additional bonuses.



Reconnaissance Outcome

Effect of Investigate Check	Result
–6 or worse	The final reconnaissance went badly wrong. Confusing or misleading information is gathered and whether or not the enemy detected the reconnaissance operation at the time, they are now aware that combat is imminent. Surprise is not possible and DM-2 applies to all the Travellers' checks to resolve the combat.
–4 to –5	Confusing or misleading information is gathered and whether or not the enemy detected the reconnaissance operation at the time, they are now aware that combat is imminent. Surprise is not possible and DM-1 applies to all the Travellers' checks to resolve the combat.
–3 to –1	Partial information is available but it is inaccurate in places or has serious gaps. DM-1 applies to the Travellers' checks to resolve the combat and to achieve surprise.
0	Sufficient information is available but it is vague or patchy and contains a number of inaccuracies. DM-1 applies to the Travellers' checks to resolve the combat and to achieve surprise.
1–3	Sufficient information is available and reasonably reliable. No modifier is applied to mission and operation resolution.
3–5	Good, solid intelligence is available. The Travellers may choose one benefit; either the enemy's intended combat tactic is known or DM+1 applies to the Travellers' checks to resolve the combat and to achieve surprise.
6 or better	Good, solid intelligence is available. The enemy's intended combat tactic is known and DM+1 applies to the Travellers' checks to resolve the combat and to achieve surprise.

Ambushes and Unexpected Encounters

In the situation where one or both forces is not aware of the other, it is necessary to determine if they become aware before contact. This is represented by an ECEI check. The difficulty of this check is normally Average (8+) for forces on the move. A force that is static but has not taken pains to conceal itself alters the check to detect an approaching enemy to Routine (6+); the chance to be detected is not changed. If a force has carefully set up an ambush it counts as static, as above, and the difficulty to detect it increases to Difficult (10+). If one force fails to detect the other it is treated as subject to Tactical Surprise (see page 76). Mutual surprise is entirely possible.

If a force has a dedicated reconnaissance element, the referee may grant DM+1 to +3 to detect the enemy force. Tech Level DM may also be applicable, at the referee's discretion. In this case the Tech Level DMs are opposed; a high-tech force may be able to conceal itself from a lower-tech force's sensor equipment.

Example

The Travellers' battalion is transiting a mountain pass where their enemies have set up an ambush. The Travellers' force is primarily motorised but first company contains a platoon of light grav tanks used for reconnaissance and fire support. The force is equipped to TL12, whereas the locals have only TL6 equipment.

The referee grants DM+2 for the reconnaissance element and allows the Travellers to apply their DM+2 for technological superiority. The locals have no idea that their camouflage netting is useless against advanced sensor equipment aboard the grav tanks.

The locals' ECEI DM is –1, and is applied to their check to detect the approaching Travellers. This is Routine (6+) and even inexperienced troops such as theirs have no difficulty noticing the approaching battalion in sufficient time. The Travellers need to succeed in a Difficult (10+) ECEI check to spot the ambush but have DM+1 for their ECEI and a total DM+4 for their reconnaissance element and its sensors. They, too, become aware of the enemy before entering the ambush. The Travellers can now decide how to proceed. They might withdraw and find another route or try to flank the ambushers and clear them. They might even charge right into the ambush zone, hoping to achieve surprise by sheer speed and aggression.

PREPARATION PHASE

The Preparation phase represents the last-minute orders, clearances and advisories issued by the commanders on each side, along with allowing resolution of any preparation the combatants may have engaged in. Preparation, in this context, does not refer to a

preparatory bombardment – that is covered by combat phases using the Bombard tactic. Instead Preparation represents everything from doctrine and training to final positioning. All of this activity leads to the force being in the best possible position and state of readiness. Poor preparation months ago, in the form of training and doctrine, may lead to personnel having insufficient ammunition or the ammunition for a particular weapon system being inaccessible aboard a different vehicle. Ineffective training or poor orders may lead to a unit breaking cover early, bad coordination resulting in a lack of covering fire, or units making piecemeal local actions instead of a concerted operation.

Long and short-term preparation contributes negatively and positively in a myriad ways to a unit's performance. It is abstracted with an Average (8+) ECEI check for a whole unit or DEI for a detachment. The Effect of this check is added to any DM resulting from intelligence and reconnaissance, and will be used throughout the resolution of the combat.

A unit that is aware of its enemy can attempt to achieve surprise during the Preparation phase. This normally means making a concealed or stealthy approach and either launching an ambush or making an unexpected attack. Surprise, or an equivalent state, can also be achieved by technological means, such as when a force has capabilities the other does not expect or cannot counter. Examples of the latter include deploying tanks and armoured vehicles against an enemy that has no weapons or training to counter them, or making a meteoric assault from orbit onto enemy positions that have no aerospace defences.

A force that wishes to attempt to surprise another must either have a capability the other is unaware of or cannot counter (technological surprise) or must be in a position to attack at an unexpected time and/or place (tactical surprise). An enemy that does not suspect there is any prospect of being attacked may be subject to strategic surprise. This might occur when the target thinks they are completely safe or when they do not know hostilities are possible. For example, if a nation makes secret preparations and disguises its intentions its initial attack may achieve strategic surprise.

Achieving surprise imposes a DM on all checks to resolve combat. Its starting value depends on the type of surprise achieved and the DM is reduced by one in each subsequent combat phase. If multiple types of surprise are achieved, only the largest DM is used. Mutual surprise, such as when two patrols blunder into one another, can be assumed to cancel out but if two forces both achieve different types of surprise the smaller DM is deducted from the larger. For example, the military of a target planet is taken completely by surprise when infiltrators attack. They gain DM+5 due to strategic surprise but encounter a defensive force of warbots and automated emplacements they knew nothing about. This is a technological surprise and results in DM+2. The referee subtracts one from the other and imposes DM+3 on the attackers' checks.

Technological Surprise

Technological surprise can only occur when the target faces an unexpected and largely un-countered capability. This is unusual, unless the target has failed to equip their forces properly. A group of ill-equipped insurgents who have no gas protection could suffer technological surprise if attacked with tear gas or something nastier. If they had no anti-armour weapons and came under attack by armoured vehicles the same situation might occur. However, most militaries have at least basic measures in place to deal with most threats. All the same, it is possible to achieve technological surprise by taking away capabilities the force has come to rely upon. For example, disabling the central communications network of a highly integrated force might work or rendering its drones and advanced sensors useless through electronic warfare.

To achieve technological surprise, a force must make a valid case for why it might apply, then succeed in a Difficult (10+) Tactics check. If successful, the force gains DM+D3 for surprise.

Tactical Surprise

Tactical surprise occurs when a force attacks at an unexpected time or place. The enemy may not be aware combat is about to occur – for example a force pursuing raiders could still be surprised by an ambush. To achieve tactical surprise it is necessary to succeed in a Difficult (10+) Tactics check with a suitable plan or situation in place. If successful a DM equal to the Effect of the check is applied.

Strategic Surprise

Strategic surprise is only possible when a force has no idea it might be attacked or is incredibly complacent. To achieve strategic surprise it is necessary to succeed in a Very Difficult (12+) Tactics check under suitable circumstances. If successful the force gains DM+1D plus the Effect of the check. If unsuccessful the force may immediately check for tactical surprise.

OVERSTRENGTH AND UNDERSTRENGTH FORCES

The combat resolution rules assume that the forces engaged are roughly average size for their type. A force that is above the average size for its type by up to 25% is referred to as 'overstrength' and gains DM+1 on checks to resolve combat. This is increased to DM+2 if the force is formally organised as a reinforced version of its type. Examples of reinforced formations include an infantry company that has six platoons rather than the usual upper limit of five – plus an efficient command structure to accommodate the extra personnel – or a normal-strength infantry battalion that has robotic fire support weapon platforms incorporated into its companies.

A force is considered understrength if is contains less than 80% of its nominal personnel or equipment. DMs for being over or under strength are as follows:

Force Strength Modifiers

Force Level	DM
Reinforced	+2
Overstrength (121-150% of nominal size)	+1
81–120% of normal strength	0
61–80%	–1
51–60%	–2
41–50%	–3
31–40%	–4
21–30%	–5
11–20%	–6
6–10%	–7
1–5%	–8

The modifier for one level of force size disparity is DM–4, whereas a battalion at 25% of nominal strength could have around 150 personnel and be effectively company-sized. A battalion at this strength receives DM–5, and would actually be at a disadvantage against a fully-formed company. This is reasonable, as the battalion will have gaps in its organisation and be severely disrupted. If the unit's commanders want they can reorganise the force during the preparation phase of any subsequent combat.

Amalgamated, Reorganised and Scratch Forces

During the Preparation phase a unit's commanders can attempt an emergency reorganisation of their forces. This can also be done in less urgent style if the Travellers have time. A careful recognition takes 2D+12 hours, and if interrupted the force suffers DM-4 on checks to resolve combat. A hurried reorganisation can be performed on the fly but has the potential to go very wrong.

To make a hurried reorganisation or amalgamation of forces the officer overseeing it must make a Very Difficult (12+) Tactics check. Any negative Effect of this check is applied as a DM to resolve the unit's next combat, in addition to any DM for being a Scratch or Provisional force. A careful reorganisation is completed automatically. In both cases the resulting formation is referred to as a 'Scratch' force. Scratch forces suffer DM-2 on all checks to resolve combat and on CEI, ECEI or DEI checks. After one combat or 1D days, a Scratch force is upgraded to Provisional status and now suffers DM-1 in all checks. A force remains Provisional until formally reorganised over 2D days, with suitable personnel assigned or promoted into positions suitable for the continued functioning of the unit as a formal combat force.

Reorganisation can be done in either direction. A shattered battalion could be broken down into as Provisional company-sized force and two Provisional platoons or a collection of units could be amalgamated into a Scratch or Provisional battalion. It is possible the mercenaries may build their force up into a larger one in the course of a series of battles by absorbing the remnants of local forces. This assumes the absorbed forces are compatible – they must be of generally similar type, tech level and training standard, and be formally organised military units or experienced militia. If a mercenary force instead recruits a horde of untrained people, it will have to recalculate its CBAS, CEI and similar values using the process detailed on page 53.

TACTICS SELECTION

At the end of the preparation phase each force decides on what tactic it will use in the first phase of combat. Unless orders are changed or there is a plan to change tactics at a given time or in specific circumstances the force will continue to use this tactic until the combat is resolved. If reconnaissance has uncovered one side's chosen tactic it is revealed before the opposing force chooses theirs. Tactics are discussed on page 82.

COMBAT PHASES

Each Combat phase, the force that has the initiative – this is almost always the attacker – makes a check to resolve the outcome of that phase. This check is subject to DMs for surprise, Tech Level and whichever of the unit's CBAS values applies. There may be negative DMs for the opposition's CBAS characteristic and Tech Level. In addition, DMs for tactics and environment may apply. The fight goes on until the Travellers achieve victory, are defeated or until they decide to break off.

It is possible to break off from a losing fight then come back for another attempt or try to turn a defeat around by an immediate counterattack. A previously defeated force (or one that has broken off a losing engagement then re-engaged) begins with DM-2 (figured into the running DM) and an additional DM-2 for each subsequent failed attempt. Battering the force to pieces against impossible odds will lead to mutiny.

If a routed force is ordered back into action, it will refuse or make a token attempt then go to ground and stay there unless its leaders can make Very Difficult (12+) Leadership check. Even then, the force suffers DM-4 to its combat resolution checks. Ordering a force into action in this way may result in the loss of MOR if a Minor Morale check is not successful.

Outcome DMs

Total all DMs for the Travellers' force from the following:

Surprise (this reduces by –1 in each subsequent phase until it reaches 0)
Reconnaissance and Intelligence
Preparation
Relevant CBAS characteristic
Force Tech Level
Cumulative DM for Advance result in previous phases
DM for force size disparity
Tactic DMs
Opposed Mobility DMs, in some situations
Any miscellaneous DMs which may apply

Subtract all DMs from the following:

Enemy relevant CBAS characteristic
Cumulative DM for Setback result in previous phases
Any miscellaneous DMs which may apply

This is applied to a roll on the Combat Phase Outcome table.

Combat Phase Outcome

2D + DMs	Outcome
0 or less	Rout: The force is totally defeated, suffering heavy casualties and a collapse of fighting power. This fight is lost and another attempt cannot be made without reinforcements, reorganisation and a period of recuperation.
1–2	Defeat: The force is defeated and must abandon the objective or fall back to a safe rally point. Another attempt can be made almost immediately but without a chance to regroup and recover from the defeat any subsequent attempts are made with DM-2, increased by an additional –2 for every failed attempt after the first.
3–5	Setback: The force suffers a setback, losing some ground or taking casualties. DM-1 is applied to further combat resolution checks. This DM is cumulative.
6–8	Deadlock: The fight is deadlocked. No changes occur this phase.
9–11	Advance: The force advances its position, perhaps literally or in some other way, such as the enemy becoming demoralised or running short of ammunition. DM+1 is applied to further combat resolution checks. This DM is cumulative.
12–14	Victory: The force has gained an obvious advantage that causes the enemy to break off, surrender or otherwise quit the fight. Pockets of resistance may remain and it is possible that not all objectives have been completely achieved.
15+	Total Victory: The force side has overrun or wiped out the enemy, securing objectives in time to prevent the destruction of documents or escape of senior enemies.

The timing of any given phase can vary. It will typically be few minutes in the case of a small firefight but might be several hours if the Travellers' force is involved in a siege. Phase length is normally determined by the size of forces involved but the referee can modify these timings to suit the situation.

Force Size vs Phase Length

Force Size	Typical Phase Length
Squad	1D minutes
Section	2D minutes
Platoon	2Dx10 minutes
Company	2Dx30 minutes
Battalion	2D hours

These guidelines assume fairly intense but sometimes intermittent combat. A protracted bombardment or long period of skirmishing might result in far longer phases.

RESOLUTION PHASE

At the end of the combat, when one force has broken off or been defeated, it is necessary to resolve the effects of the combat in terms of the strategic situation and the consequences for the mercenary unit. Newcomers to the mercenary trade might be excited about winning the battle but old hands are more interested in fulfilling the contract with a minimum of fuss, casualties and ammunition expenditure. The best commanders always have an eye to the future, ensuring that the price of victory does not impact the unit's long-term viability.

At the end of the engagement, it is necessary to determine the effects on the unit's future readiness and the fate of its members. This takes the form of a Post-Action Assessment (POA). The POA begins with an assessment of the level of casualties incurred by the force. In this context a casualty is anyone requiring medical attention or who is not available for service immediately after the battle. A squad stranded because their vehicle's lifters were damaged are considered casualties, although they need recovering rather than healing. Likewise some troopers who became detached from their unit and got lost are unavailable after the battle but probably unharmed.

A small proportion of casualties are actually dead but since mercenaries generally encounter more danger than regular troops outside a major war, injuries that take a while to heal or which occur repeatedly to the same individuals will wear down the unit over time.

Some casualties are not physical. After a tough engagement there will be some who no longer want to be part of 'the life'. A proportion of these will come around after a short rest; others after an extended furlough. Some will choose to leave the unit or become a liability if they are convinced to stay. Overall, any combat will take its toll.

Immediately after the combat has ended, the amount of casualties taken is determined. If the force is required to fight again immediately, it does so at a reduced force level. If this makes the unit understrength, the Travellers have a choice between reorganising their unit as a smaller force, absorbing some orphaned parts of other formations or accepting a negative DM to resolve combat. In addition, a force ordered straight back into combat after a defeat or breaking off to avoid a worse result suffers DM-2 on checks to resolve combat.

The level of casualties taken depends on the terrain and the tactics of the opposing forces. These produce a DM which is applied to the check for casualties taken (see page 88). Further modifiers for protracted combat – actions that take longer than one phase to resolve can take the casualty percentage above 100%. This is because most casualties are not actually dead but longer battles mean not only more casualties but also greater difficulty in recovering the wounded, which can lead to people who would otherwise have survived being lost.

To determine the level of casualties taken in a battle, the unit's leaders must make an Average (8+) Medic check using the appropriate DEI or CEI. The Effect of this check is added to the result of a 2D roll on the Casualty Percentage table, with DM-1 per phase the combat took to resolve. Percentages are based on the unit's manning level at the beginning of the combat but for simplicity the standard staffing level of the unit type can be used instead.

Some combat situations or environments have implications for casualty determination. See page 88 for details.

Casualties are applied as a percentage of the deployed force. However, only a very small proportion of these casualties are actually dead. In the case of equipment-heavy formations, 'casualties' represent a mix of busted equipment and injured people.

- Roughly 1/3 of the casualties taken are 'slight' and can continue with their duties if necessary. This represents personnel who were shocked, cut off from their force, trapped somewhere or not wounded as badly as they thought. It will take roughly 2D hours to assess and locate these personnel or to direct them back to their units.
- Roughly 1/3 of the casualties taken are 'minor' and require a period of recuperation, perhaps with some light duty. These personnel are unavailable for 2D days on average, after which they can return to duty.
- Roughly 1/3 of the casualties taken are 'serious or fatal'. These are further subdivided: 1/3 are dead, 1/3 require emergency life-saving measures and may require long-term treatment and 1/3 require 8D days of medical care (about a month on average) before they can return to duty.

For non-Traveller units it is often sufficient to take the casualty percentage total and roughly divide it into thirds but for the Travellers it may be important to know exactly how many personnel were injured and to what degree.

Example

An infantry company with a strength of 150 personnel suffers casualties and gets a result of 11 on the Casualty Percentage table. This represents 2D% Slight casualties, 1D% Minor casualties and 1D% Serious or Fatal casualties. This is determined as 7% Slight (10.5, rounded to 11), 5% Minor (7.5, rounded to 8) and 3% Serious or Fatal (4.5, rounded to 5).

This means that immediately after the combat is over it is down 24 personnel. The force now has 126 effectives available if it must immediately fight again.

Casualty Percentage

Result	Slight Casualty	Minor Casualty	Serious/Fatal Casualty	Casualty Total
0 or less	5D%	5D%	5D%	15D%
1	5D%	5D%	4D%	14D%
2	5D%	4D%	4D%	13D%
3	4D%	4D%	4D%	12D%
4	4D%	4D%	3D%	11D%
5	4D%	3D%	3D%	10D%
6	3D%	3D%	3D%	9D%
7	3D%	3D%	2D%	8D%
8	3D%	2D%	2D%	7D%
9	2D%	2D%	2D%	6D%
10	2D%	2D%	1D%	5D%
11	2D%	1D%	1D%	4D%
12	1D%	1D%	1D%	3D%
13	1D%	1D3%	1D3%	2D%
14	1D3%	1D3%	0	1D%
15 or more	1D3%	0	0	1D3%

Over the next 5 hours (determined on 2D), 11 of these personnel are found and directed back to their unit. Some had minor wounds, some were lost or so fatigued they just crawled off somewhere to sleep. A couple were shocked by their first combat experience and had to seriously think about their future with the unit but decided they would carry on. At the end of this time the unit is back up to 137 effectives. Some personnel are shaky, some are carrying minor injuries but the force is combat-capable if necessary.

Another 8 personnel dribble back to the unit over the next 12 days. Some get patched up and head back straight away, some need time to heal and a couple milk their relatively minor injuries for medically-mandated time off. The unit is back up to 145 personnel at the end of this time.

Of the 5 'serious or fatal' casualties two are dead and another requires long-term rehabilitation. The other two will need major medical assistance away from the combat – one for psychological issues and the other for physical injuries. The effect on the unit is the same whatever sort of injury is sustained. These two require 8D days of medical care before being able to report for light duty.

Damage to equipment is assessed on a similar basis. A grav armour battalion that has suffered 12% casualties has 12% of its vehicles unavailable at the end of the engagement and an equivalent proportion of its personnel injured. Using a quick division into thirds this translates to about 4% of the vehicles crippled, 4% seriously damaged and 4% misplaced or easily returned to action. If the battalion has around 75 vehicles all told, this is 3 vehicles in each category. Thus 3 are returned to combat worthiness (and available to the unit) within a few hours, a few more within a few days, and only one is completely trashed. The other two will require a lot of workshop time but can be fixed.

Casualty and Equipment Loss Levels

15% casualties, even most of them are relatively slight, is a lot of personnel out of action. Over time, a casualty rate as low as 1–2% can drain a unit of experienced personnel. Wise commanders ensure casualties are kept to a minimum in a fight and well looked after afterward. The same goes for equipment. The loss levels given above assume the force has a suitable opportunity to collect wounded and to remove damaged equipment for repair. If the unit was forced to retreat, casualty levels are increased and even more so if it was routed. A vigorous pursuit after an enemy retreats will also increase their casualties, although friendly casualties may also be higher and there is a chance of running into an ambush. See Post-Battle Pursuit on page 96.

In addition to these factors, casualties and equipment losses can be reduced by effective procedures and support formations. Note that these are opportunities for roleplaying and adventures spun out of the battle aftermath.

Reducing Casualties

To reduce casualties, the leaders of a unit must make a CEI check using the force's Support score. If a specialist medical unit is available or the force has a specialist medical sub-unit, the Support of this formation can be used instead. The Effect of this check is added to a 2D roll on the Casualty and Equipment Loss Reduction table.

Reducing Equipment Losses

To reduce losses of vehicles, artillery and similar large pieces of hardware, the leaders of a unit must make a CEI check using the force's Support value. If a specialist recovery or technical repair unit is available or the force has a specialist sub-unit of the right type, the Support value of this formation can be used instead. The Effect of this check is added to a 2D roll on the Casualty and Equipment Loss Reduction table.

Casualty and Equipment Loss Reduction

2D + Effect	Reduction
0	No Reduction. In addition, a Mishap (see page 69) occurs
1–2	No Reduction. In addition, an Incident (see page 68) occurs
3–5	1D of losses are downgraded, an Incident (see page 68) occurs
6–8	2D of losses are downgraded
9–11	3D of losses are downgraded
12–15	4D of losses are downgraded
15+	5D of losses are downgraded

Loss reduction is done by 'downgrading' the losses. Each 1D of downgraded casualties can be applied to the table Casualty Percentage table separately and allows 1D% of casualties to be effectively moved to the next column to the left. Thus a force that has nominally lost 3D/3D/2D but can downgrade 3D of casualties might choose to modify 2D of 'serious or fatal' casualties to Minor and 1D of Minor casualties to Slight. The end result is a loss of 4D% Slight, 4D% Minor and no Serious or Fatal casualties.

C H A P T E R - E L E V E N

TACTICS

For quick resolution of a minor action, it can be useful to assume that both sides use suitable tactics for their force and mission, and that tactical decisions cancel one another out. Full resolution requires the consideration of tactical decisions on either side. There are two factors at play here; the force's level of aggression and the actual tactics used.

LEVEL OF AGGRESSION

Fortune sometimes does indeed favour the bold… and on other occasions they charge straight into a minefield or concealed heavy defences. Sometimes a force simply cannot afford to take casualties and must operate with great caution but then again going in hard can sometimes overwhelm an opponent before they can put up any meaningful resistance. Thus the decision of how aggressive to be is not a simple one.

There are five levels of aggression, each suited to different situations. As a rule, highly aggressive actions tends to produce more decisive results but also more casualties than cautious ones. The possible levels of aggression are: Reckless, Aggressive, Bold, Cautious and Timid. All levels of aggression can be used with any tactic.

Aggression levels must be chosen before surprise is determined.

Reckless

A Reckless attack or defence heedless of casualties offers the possibility of a quick and decisive victory, at the price of increased casualties. It also maximises the unit's advantages in terms of surprise and superior Tech Level. A Reckless battle plan cannot be changed after final reconnaissance, although it can be aborted at the last moment. If the Travellers choose to do this there is a chance that some units will be compromised. The force breaks off and automatically loses the battle or gives up its positions. In addition, a Routine (6+) Tactics check is made and the Effect is applied to a check to determine the level of casualties taken in the frantic abort-and-retire operation. The opposing force takes no significant casualties in this situation.

A force behaving in a Reckless manner may actually have prepared carefully and managed the risks but when the time comes it is fully committed. A force attacking recklessly will charge headlong at the enemy, relying on firepower and speed to overrun their positions. There is no time for changes of plan or detailed orders in a Reckless attack, and if the timetable becomes dislocated the operation can be a disaster. However, a successful Reckless attack will shock the enemy and may be complete before resistance begins to firm up. A Reckless defence implies 'die in place' orders, with units holding their positions to the last or launching headlong counterattacks rather than retreat.

Reckless battle plans are prone to planning and command and control problems. For this reason the commander must make a Difficult (10+) Tactics check at the beginning of the action. If this is failed, twice the negative effect is applied as a DM on the resolution of the combat and also to determine casualties at the end. If the check is successful, no DM is applied.

In addition, other DMs are generated by a Reckless attack.

- A Reckless attack that achieves surprise of any form triples the DM for surprise.
- Reckless attacks also triple the force's Tech Level DM.
- When determining casualties for a force using a Reckless level of aggression, DM-2 applies to the casualty resolution check. If the Tactics check at the beginning of the battle was failed, twice any negative Effect is also applied to casualty resolution.

A Reckless battle plan cannot be stopped no matter how badly wrong it is going. The unit will attack or cling to its positions until it is soundly defeated, battering itself to pieces in desperate counterattacks to recapture lost strongpoints or remaining under artillery fire to the bitter end. If it is over quickly the force may win a spectacular victory but a slugging match will be extremely costly and may result in the collapse of the unit even if victory is attained.

If the resolution of the first phase of combat is Advance, this is upgraded to Victory and if the result is Victory this is upgraded to Total Victory. Other results are left as they stand.

Aggressive

An Aggressive battleplan increases the advantages offered by surprise and tech level but retains a measure of control in case something goes wrong. Advantages and risks are smaller than those associated with a Reckless battle plan. An Aggressive battle plan can be changed after final reconnaissance but this risks dislocation and needless casualties. The Travellers must make an Average (8+) Tactics check. If this is failed the Effect is applied to all checks to resolve the combat and also to determine casualties at the end. Alternatively the Travellers may choose to abort the operation and withdraw. Neither side takes significant casualties in this situation.

Aggressive battle plans can go awry faster than the commander can react. For this reason the commander must make an Average (8+) Tactics check at the beginning of the action. If this is failed, any negative Effect is applied as a DM on the resolution of the combat and also to determine casualties at the end. If the check is successful, no DM is applied. In addition, other DMs are generated by an Aggressive attack.

- An Aggressive attack that achieves surprise of any form doubles the DM for surprise.
- Aggressive attacks also double the force's Tech Level DM.
- If the Tactics check at the beginning of the battle was failed, any negative Effect is also applied to casualty resolution.

An Aggressive battle plan can be aborted after 1D phases if the commander so chooses. See Breaking Off on page 94. Aggressive troops are likely to be so heavily engaged that they have trouble disengaging even if they get the order to do so but unlike a Reckless force it is possible.

If the resolution of the first phase of combat is Victory this is upgraded to Total Victory. Other results are left as they stand.

Bold

A Bold battleplan balances risk-management with potential benefits. A Bold battle plan can be changed after final reconnaissance with relatively little risk. The Travellers must make a Routine (6+) Tactics check. If this is failed the Effect is applied to all checks to resolve the combat but not to determine casualties at the end. Alternatively the Travellers may choose to abort the operation and withdraw. Neither side takes significant casualties in this situation.

ART TO COME

A Bold battle plan plays to the unit's strengths. Any DM for its relevant CBAS characteristic is doubled. No other DMs are generated by this level of aggression.

Bold battle plans incorporate cut-outs to allow the plan to be revised or the operation to be aborted. The commander of a Bold force may choose to break off after D3 phases. See Breaking Off on page 94.

Cautious

A Cautious battleplan is more about avoiding casualties than exploiting opportunities. A Cautious commander may abort the operation or change their tactic after final reconnaissance without any risk. No additional DMs are generated by this level of aggression.

The commander of a Cautious force may choose to break off at any time after the first phase. See Breaking Off on page 94.

Timid

A Timid battleplan is normally associated with feints, reconnaissance missions and situations where it is useful to look like the force intends to fight. This might be a token defence 'for the honour of the flag' or diplomatic reasons, or a deception to make the enemy think an objective is held in force. Once the real situation becomes apparent, the defenders will be ready to pull out. A Timid operation might also be mounted in order to draw a pursuing enemy into an ambush.

A Timid commander may abort the operation or change their tactic after final reconnaissance without any risk. No additional DMs are generated by this level of aggression.

The commander of a Timid force must break off as soon as a result of Setback or worse occurs, and may choose to break off in any phase. If the withdrawal was forced by a setback, the Timid force may suffer worse than usual from a pursuit than usual. See Breaking Off on page 94.

COMBAT SITUATIONS

Combat situations can be generalised into five types: Attack, Raid, Encounter, Ambush and Siege. The nature of each dictates many of the options available to commanders. In some situations it is not possible to gather intelligence before beginning a battle and some tactics are incompatible with the circumstances. The type of combat situation will indicate to the referee what the outcome represents.

Attack

An Attack occurs when the offensive force seeks to destroy the enemy or drive them from an objective and to gain control of that objective. Typically an Attack is made at a time of the commander's choosing, although circumstances may force one to be made at an inopportune time. For example, a mercenary commander may be under pressure from the client to attack immediately despite the odds being likely to be better at a later time. Almost any tactic can be used by a force making an attack, although obviously defence is not appropriate and skirmishing may not be.

A force that makes a successful Attack forces its opponents to retreat from their positions and may occupy them or pursue. DM-3 is imposed on the casualty determination check for the losing side and DM-1 on the winning side, in addition to the results of a pursuit.

Raid

A Raid occurs when the offensive force tries to attain some objective against resistance but does not intend to retain control of the battle area. Examples include a reconnaissance in force, a hostage-rescue or personnel snatch mission and possibly an artillery bombardment with no immediate follow-up. A Raid might be launched purely to harass or inflict casualties on an enemy but more commonly will have a specific objective such as the destruction of a supply stockpile.

A force that successfully completes a Raid destroys its target or escapes with it but does not force the enemy out of their positions. Raids do not impose DMs on the casualty determination check.

Encounter

An Encounter occurs when two forces are on the move. Either or both may be unaware of the other's presence and mutual surprise is possible. Alternatively, when reconnaissance or skirmishing forces are sent into an area they may encounter one another. An advance-to-contact situation may result in an Encounter rather than an Attack or Raid if the enemy is not met where the plan indicated they would be.

In an encounter situation the advantage is generally with the side that becomes aware of the other first, and with the most mobile formation. A check should be made to determine if either force becomes aware of the other in time to make a meaningful plan. This is dealt with in the Preparation phase, on page 75. If both sides blunder into one another, both are subject to tactical surprise (see page 76), which might be worse for one force than the other.

In an Encounter situation the side with the highest Mobility DM gains DM+1 on all combat resolution checks and if only one side becomes aware of the other in time to make a plan, that side gains an additional DM +1.

Ambush

An Ambush occurs only when one force is unaware of another, which has had time to prepare. As the moving force approaches the ambush site, the normal check is made to determine if each becomes aware of the other. The ambushing force may be generally aware of the approaching enemy but still needs to check in case the arrival is not quite as planned. If an ambushing force is aware of the enemy and they are unaware, the ambushers gain DM+6 on their combat resolution check in the first phase, dropping to +4 then +2 in the subsequent phases. If the Travellers are the ones being ambushed this is translated to –6/–4/–2. If the ambushers are not aware of the approaching enemy but are still in prepared ambush positions the DM is halved to +3/+2/+1.

Siege

A Siege occurs where two forces are in proximity and aware of one another and significant defences or terrain obstacles are in place for at least one side. The reduction of a heavily defended city is a classic example of siege warfare, as is a period of trench warfare. Sieges can be on a large or small scale; a mercenary company that is forced to take cover in buildings and becomes surrounded could be said to be in a siege situation.

It is difficult, but not impossible, to achieve surprise in a siege situation. Bursting out of an unexpected exit or launching an attack whose build-up was not detected, can achieve tactical surprise. DM-2 applies on all attempts to achieve surprise in a siege situation.

Often a successful combat will not end a siege but will alter the strategic situation. For example, the Travellers might launch an attack to clear a section of the enemy's defences, forcing them to fall back to a weaker position or lose the use of a critical road. A large-scale siege will usually require several combat operations to resolve, whereas the situation where a small unit is cornered will usually be over in one decisive action.

TACTICS

The tactics used by a commander can have huge implications for the level of casualties as well as the success of any missions undertaken. Some tactics are only viable with certain forces; others are unsuited to terrain or circumstances.

Direct Attack

The Direct Attack tactic is straightforward and can be used in almost any situation. A direct attack makes use of covering fire, concealment and all the usual low-level tactics practiced by military forces. It is a predictable gambit, offering no special advantages. A Direct Attack can be made at any level of aggression but very timid attacks are unlikely to succeed.

Close Assault

The Close Assault tactic is essentially a more aggressive version of Direct Attack. The attacking force wants to close as quickly as possible with the enemy and bring about a point-blank engagement. This is risky and will result in higher casualties than a normal attack. A Close Assault can be made in a Bold, Aggressive or Reckless manner. When determining the outcome of a Close Assault, any DM for surprise is doubled. The attacker must succeed in a Mobility Check to get into contact with the enemy. This is automatic if the enemy has chosen a Static Defence tactic. Otherwise, a failed Mobility Check imposes its Effect on the combat resolution check and the check to determine casualties. If the attacking force manages to bring about a close action its Combat characteristic is considered to be doubled… but so is that of the enemy force. Thus this tactic is best used by fast-moving, high-firepower forces.

Flank

The Flank tactic requires the attacking force to find a vulnerable point and exploit it with a rapid manoeuvre. A force that has chosen to Flank may make a Mobility check and add the Effect to all checks to resolve the combat. However, if a force is trying to Flank and is counterattacked (with a Direct Attack, Close Assault or Flank tactic) the advantage is lost and a fluid and confused action is likely to ensue. If the counterattacking force succeeds on a Mobility Check it hits the flanking force at the perfect moment and gains DM+3 on all checks to resolve the combat. If this check is failed the counterattacking force still gains DM+1 and the flanking force loses the benefits from the manoeuvre.

Vertical Envelopment

The Vertical Envelopment tactic is a variation of the Flank tactic but using air or grav mobility – or a direct assault by troops dropping from orbit. In the latter case, known as a meteoric assault, the attackers automatically reach their target unless they are stopped by aerospace defences. When a Vertical Envelopment is carried out by air or grav vehicles, a successful Mobility check is required to reach the target unless it is using the Static Defence tactic. Any DM from surprise – of any kind – is tripled when making a vertical envelopment.

Active Defence

The Active Defence tactic assumes that the defending force is prepared to make spoiling attacks and to transfer forces around the defended area. It may even launch counterattacks against forces moving up to make an attack but will return to its defended zone rather than exploiting successes. The defending force gains the advantage of any defensive fortifications (see page 110). In addition the defending commander may make an Average (8+) Tactics check each phase and impose the Effect of this check as a negative DM on the attacker's check to resolve combat.

Static Defence

The Static Defence tactic is normally used by slow-moving forces or those with immobile equipment. The defending force sticks to its positions or stands its ground and takes full advantage of any cover or fortifications it has. In addition to any fortifications, the attacking force suffers DM-2 when resolving any form of static position providing the defending force has had time to find cover. In the event that an artillery or support formation is attacked it will default to Static Defence unless sufficient warning is available that the unit's security element can put some other tactic into operation.

Elastic Defence

The Elastic Defence tactic is normally used by highly mobile forces. A force using an elastic defence will retreat or move in the face of an attack, allowing the main enemy thrust to strike empty air. This is followed by a series of counterattacks or manoeuvres and perhaps bombardment of likely enemy objectives to wear down and disrupt their forces. A force conducting an Elastic Defence may make a Manoeuvre Check. If successful DM+2 is obtained or DM-2 applied to the opposition's check to resolve combat. A force using Elastic Defence gains DM+1 to break off from combat.

Skirmish

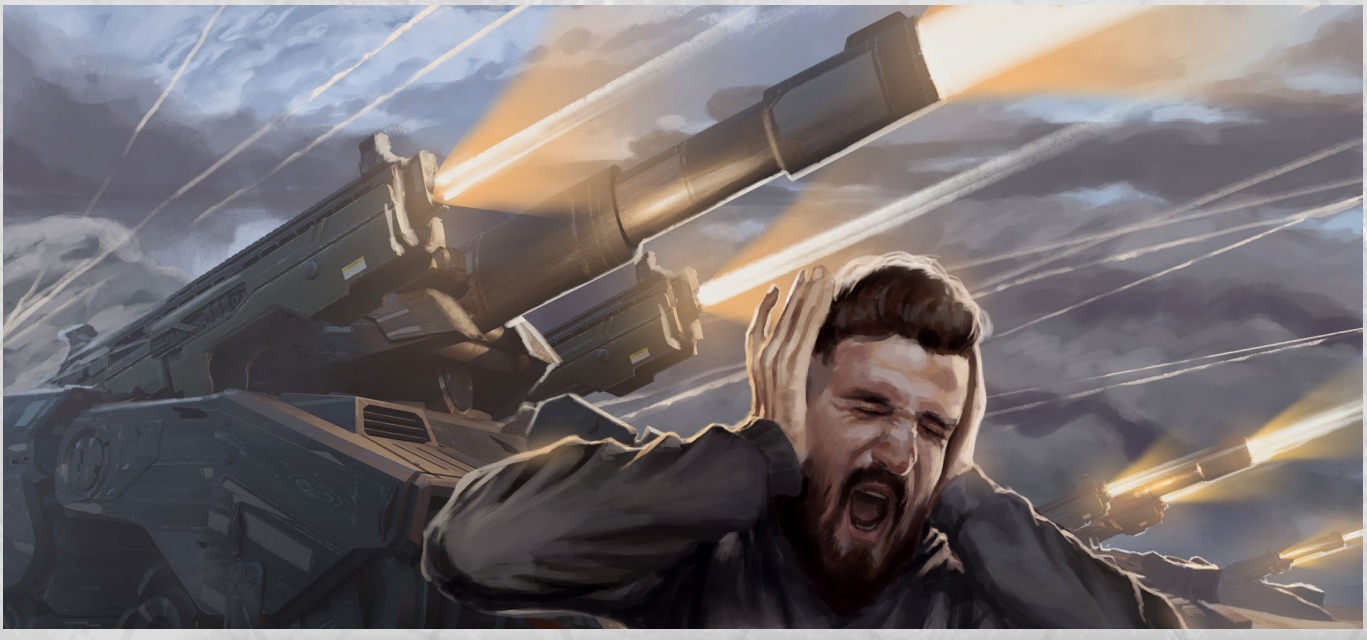
The Skirmish tactic is sometimes used to keep the enemy off balance and unsure of a commander's intentions or to contest an area of terrain without holding it in force. It may also be used by reconnaissance forces. Reckless and Aggressive skirmishing is not appropriate, since the whole point of this tactic is to avoid becoming entangled in a decisive action. A force using Skirmish gains DM+3 to break off from combat.

Ambush

The Ambush tactic is used when a force intends to attack enemies passing a concealed position. Ambushes are detailed on page 75.

Bombard

The Bombard tactic is used by units with long-range weapons such as artillery or aerospace defence formations and also by fast-moving aerospace or grav vehicles. A unit using Bombard cannot lose a battle if the enemy cannot engage it. Any negative result beyond 'setback' is considered to mean the bombardment was ineffective but will not harm the bombarding unit. In a situation where the enemy can engage in counter-battery fire, the bombardment battle is resolved normally, using Artillery rather than Combat, and it is possible to be soundly defeated. If an artillery formation is directly attacked, it will switch to a defensive tactic if aware of the incoming force. If not, it will default to Static Defence. In either case the artillery unit's Combat is used rather than its Artillery or Aerospace characteristic.



CHAPTER - TWELVE

ENVIRONMENT

The environment, in the sense of general conditions, terrain and weather, is important in almost all forms of combat. Grav vehicles can theoretically ignore the ground below but in practice they are still influenced by it. Terrain will conceal enemy forces and provide cover for them, so must be considered even when fighting at high altitude. Tall terrain features can also provide cover for approaching grav or aerospace vehicles and may have atmospheric eddies around them that can disrupt flight or targeting. As a general rule grav tanks and other flight-capable vehicles hug the ground and take advantage of terrain features. Those intended to do so usually have top-mounted weapons similar to the turrets of tracked or wheeled vehicles. Those intended to fly above the terrain may have their weapons mounted on the sides or underneath the main body. There are advantages to both systems and a skilled commander knows how to maximise them.

Weather can affect military operations, although as a general rule its effects are more pronounced on lower-tech forces. A properly equipped military force uses its Tech Level modifier as a DM to offset the effects of bad weather. This in part reflects better sensors but also general equipment. Boots and uniforms of more advanced materials will keep soldiers dry and warm in conditions where low-tech forces are driven into shelter. For this reason a negative Tech Level modifier exacerbates the effect of bad weather.

'Properly equipped' in this context means the unit has been supplied with uniforms, outer clothing and general equipment of the same tech level as its weapons. A force armed with TL15 small arms but dressed in civilian clothes is not considered properly equipped in this context. Equipment levels are dealt with on page 28 of Book 2.

When a force is operating in a generally habitable environment there will be minor variations in the weather, which have only minor significance. A bit of intermittent rain or mist is an occupational hazard for military personnel and can be discounted most of the time. Only when conditions become seriously difficult do they affect combat operations. Most of the time a force using a defensive tactic will be less affected by bad weather conditions, so modifiers work in the favour of defenders. If both forces are on the move, such as in an encounter battle or mutual skirmishing they will be equally affected. However, if one side is equipped at a sufficiently high tech level that they have a better Tech Level DM than their opponents they gain the advantage of this disparity in addition to their usual Tech Level advantage.

Example

A TL10 mercenary unit is skirmishing in thick fog with a TL8 local force. The mercenaries' Tech Level DM is factored in as normal during combat resolution but they gain an additional advantage due to their sensors and communications gear – or to put that another way their opponents are hampered far more than they are. Both forces suffer DM-2 in thick fog, which would normally cancel out. However, the mercenaries have a +1 Tech Level modifier, which gives them a net DM-1 for the conditions. In situations where the advantage is relevant – such as gaining surprise or resolving combat – the mercenaries can apply the difference between their environmental DM and that of the opponents as an additional DM+1. If it is the locals who are checking under these conditions, they suffer a net DM-1. If both must make a check they use their own DM, which is –2 for the locals and –1 for the mercenaries.

POOR CONDITIONS

Poor conditions refers to any combination of bad visibility, cold, heat or generally miserable conditions such as heavy rain or freezing fog, which might make soldiers more concerned with getting warm and dry than keeping alert. Poor conditions impose a DM ranging from –1 to –3 depending on severity. This is based on an estimate of the overall 'poorness' of the combat environment so may be the result of multiple minor factors or due to a single over-riding consideration. If multiple factors apply the referee may decide they add up to the next level of difficulty on the Poor Combat Conditions table.

For example, a force that encounters moderate cold rain on a low-gravity world is going to have a miserable time of it but will ultimately face only Mildly Poor conditions. If they were trying to fight in waist-deep half-frozen water in an arctic wilderness, with snowfall so thick that visibility was restricted to just a few metres, the force could be said to have encountered Severely Poor conditions despite no one factor that category applying. They might also be justified in requesting a pay rise.

Poor Combat Conditions

	Condition	Examples
Mildly Poor (DM-1)	Impaired visibility	Moderate rain, cold mist
	Discomfort	Hot and dusty
	Impaired mobility	Low gravity (0.3–0.7g), rough terrain with sharp rocks, operating in waist-deep water
Very Poor (DM-2)	Bad Visibility	Heavy rain, strong gusty wind, thick fog
	Major Discomfort	Very cold, on a level equivalent to the worst temperate winters
	Seriously Impaired Mobility	Very low gravity (0.1–0.3g), very difficult or hazardous terrain, operating in deep water
Severely Poor (DM-4)	Difficult to function	Air so thin it is barely breathable, arctic level cold, hurricane-force winds
	Specialist Conditions	Extremely low gravity, microgravity, underwater

Poor conditions will not always affect the engaged forces. A race adapted to the thin air and dust of their homeworld will not suffer penalties for fighting there but their opponents will. Similarly, a force trained to fight in microgravity will not suffer the usual penalty for this environment.

ATMOSPHERE AND VACUUM

Soldiers cannot fight if they cannot breathe. An atmosphere that is a little difficult, such as one with a mild taint or that is just too thin is considered to be 'very poor conditions' and subject to the usual DM-2 for such a situation. Anyone fighting in an environment where it is very difficult to breathe or the atmosphere is causing mild harm – such as a bad taint or a smoke-filled building – is experiencing severely poor conditions and suffers DM-4 as usual.

Inimical atmospheric conditions do not in and of themselves impose DMs to alter combat resolution, although if there are factors that would constitute poor conditions these will apply. For example, if the Travellers are fighting in a swirling acidic mist that makes it hard to see their targets they will suffer DM-1 for mildly poor conditions but the acidic nature of the mist is instead factored into casualty determination.

- Mildly inimical conditions such as very low air pressure or slightly toxic surroundings increase casualties by +1 per dice. Thus if a unit takes 3D slight casualties this is increased to 3D+3.
- Highly inimical conditions such as hard vacuum increase casualties by +2 per dice.
- Severely inimical conditions such as acid vapour increase casualties by +4 per dice.

This assumes the forces involved have protective equipment that allows them to function in this environment at all. Anyone without a vacc suit in a vacuum environment will be too busy dying to harm anyone else and those with vacc suits will be able to fight as normal. However, those whose suits are penetrated or damaged will be in serious danger, which accounts for the additional casualties.

FORTIFICATIONS

The use of cover and concealment, as well as obscurants such as smoke, are sufficiently commonplace that they can be represented as part of a unit's Combat characteristic. However, in some circumstances a force can benefit from fortifications and defences. Fortifications range from hasty improvements of terrain features to interlocking bunker complexes. There are six levels of fortification.

To benefit from fortifications a unit must be using a defensive tactic – Active, Static or Elastic. The techniques in use can vary, from a simplistic holding of all points until they are captured or destroyed to using obstructions and strongpoints as pivots to manoeuvre upon. The DM for a fortification is applied positively if the defending unit is making a check to resolve combat and negatively if it is attacking.

Fortifications can be reduced by protracted bombardment with suitable weapons or otherwise cleared. If this is the case their DM will be reduced by a successful attack. Once the DM reaches +0 the fortification will usually be converted into a sea of rubble which may impede movement but not provide any real protection.

Improvised
Improvised fortifications typically take the form of shallow trenches or scrapes, barricades of household furniture or vehicles and rubble quickly pushed up to create a breastwork. Improvised fortifications provide a starting DM+2 or –2. A unit can improvise a defensive position for itself in 1D hours or half that time if the fortifications need face only one possible direction of attack.

Prepared
Prepared fortifications typically include trenches with a grenade sump and some kind of top cover or positions built out of sandbags and rubble. Obstacles such as pits or barbed wire may be used to impede or channel an approaching force and fields of fire will usually be cleared. Prepared positions provide DM+4 or –4 and can be set up in 3D hours or half that if they position needs to face only one direction.

Strong
Strong fortifications are the best that can be produced without undertaking some form of construction work. Interlocking trenches and rifle pits fronted with obstacles, with carefully sited support weapons, are the minimum required to create a strong position. Commonly mines or traps of some kind are sited to protect the approaches to the position. A unit can create a strong position in 6D hours of work or half that if the position is to face only one way. The starting DM for strong fortifications is +/–6.

Constructed
Constructed fortifications make use of building materials such as concrete, typically using a mix of digging in and construction to create a bunker complex or fort. Constructed fortifications may be quite basic, consisting of just a few concrete bunkers but as technology advances it is common to build in powered traverse mountings for heavy weapons, communications equipment and sensor networks. Constructed fortifications cannot be thrown together in the face of the enemy. See page 111 for information on constructing a suitable position. Constructed fortifications provide a DM equal to +/–8 in undamaged condition.

Fortress
A fortress is simply a large and powerful version of a constructed position, usually with heavy weapons and defences against aerospace attack built into a detailed scheme. A fortress may use advanced high-tech materials and will contain well-protected electrical and electronic systems. Fortress level fortifications provide a DM equal to +/–10 in undamaged condition.

Citadel
The term ‘citadel’ is used for the most impressive and heavily defended fortifications. Typically a citadel will house the world’s primary aerospace defence weapons and their control systems or act as a refuge for the government in a time of crisis. A citadel will typically be deep underground, although grav-supported structures are sometimes used instead. This allows the defence nexus to be moved away from a threat, trading mobility for the security of deep rock and earth. A citadel provides a DM equal to +/–12.

Fighting in a Fortress
The scale of an action will often dictate what role fortifications play in the resolution of a combat. At higher levels the Travellers might be committing a brigade of troops against a fortress or citadel, in which case the whole fortification DM is used against their check to resolve the combat. However, it is often possible to zoom in the focus to an attack or raid upon part of the fortification. In this case, small units may be able to infiltrate part of the fortified area and bypass part of the defences. The big artillery weapons of the fortress are not relevant to a fight revolving around a section of commandos trying to disable the main control centre, so the huge defensive bonus of the fortification can largely be ignored.

Thus major fortifications are more likely to be plot drivers than the objective of a combat, unless the Travellers are commanding a very large force. It may be that the Travellers’ mission is to disable the big guns so that a large-scale assault can succeed or to remove the threat of missile attack on starships evacuating people from the nearby starport. The referee must judge what proportion of the fortification DM applies to the present situation.

OBSTACLES AND CONCEALMENT
Obstacles can be included as part of a fortification but sometimes are used to limit enemy mobility rather than directly enhancing defence. A hostile force that must struggle through a set of obstacles to reach its target is likely to take heavier casualties than one that can approach quickly but the advent of grav mobility renders such measures far less valuable.

Obstacles range from pits and wire to large solid obstructions and may not be obvious for what they are. Obstacles such as ‘dragon’s teeth’ are obviously intended to prevent ground vehicles from approaching, as are deep concrete-lined ditches. However, these

are rarely constructed unless conflict is expected or a purely military site is to be secured. Clever city design can approximate the functions of these devices without being obvious.

One option is to construct concealed or retractable obstructions such as metal bollards that retreat into the ground when not in use. Alternatively, obstructions can be apparently decorative or even functional design features. For example, the architecture of some cities includes tall spires or sweeping dome shapes with no places a grav vehicle can land. Such features are designed to prevent a vertical envelopment of important structures or an enemy force establishing observation and fire positions in high locations. Spiky, jagged architecture is sometimes used to deter or impair a meteoric assault, making it extremely hazardous to drop troops directly into a city from orbit.

Obstacles impose a DM on a unit's mobility and any attempt to obtain surprise by speed or stealth. They are rated at five levels of impediment, from Light to Impassable. Each level imposes a DM on units affected by the obstacles, which typically means those operating at ground level. The referee must decide whether the DM applies or if there are other tactical considerations. For example, grav vehicles can simply fly over cluttered terrain but are forced to operate a little higher above the ground, which might make them more vulnerable to ground-based weapons.

Light
Most urban terrain is considered to contain light obstacles unless it has been deliberately constructed to be as open as possible. Light forest or scrubland, or somewhere with many large boulders, would be considered littered with light obstacles. This kind or terrain imposes DM-2 on Mobility checks and attempts to gain surprise by a rapid approach for all units operating at ground level.

Impeded
Impeded terrain can be natural, such as a dense boulder field or a forest, or might be created deliberately with military obstacles, wrecked vehicles or clever architecture. It is possible to create Impeded terrain without making it obvious. This level of obstruction imposes DM-4 on Mobility checks and attempts to gain surprise by speed of advance.

Cluttered
Cluttered terrain can occur in jungle or similar natural environments or can be artificially created. If that is the case, the area will either be an obvious military obstruction or will look like a disaster zone. Cluttered terrain imposes DM-6 on Mobility checks for personnel and small vehicles such as motorcycles but can only be navigated slowly and with great care by vehicles.

Highly Cluttered
Highly cluttered terrain occurs in dense jungle or a deliberately constructed obstacle maze. People on foot can slip carefully through but vehicles can only pass by clearing obstacles. A bulldozer or similar vehicle might be able to get through but most will become stuck in short order. Highly cluttered terrain imposes DM-8 on those forms of transport that can get through at all.

Impassable
Impassable terrain is just that, unless obstacles are carefully cleared as the force proceeds. An example would be tremendously dense forest where a path must be cut with machetes. Vehicles cannot operate in such terrain and even clearance with engineering vehicles risks getting stuck. Impassable terrain imposes DM-10 on those forms of transport than can get through at all.

The effects of cluttered terrain can be useful from a tactical perspective. Creating an area the enemy cannot move their tanks through may allow defences to be concentrated elsewhere or could be used to channel an attack. Alternatively the area could be a killing zone covered by heavy weapons. Forces might become trapped against such terrain, although the referee should keep in mind that locals who know the land might have pre-prepared routes through otherwise impossible terrain.

The effects of terrain are open to some interpretation. For example, if the Travellers want to gain surprise by way of rapid advance to the target, extremely cluttered terrain will make this difficult. On the other hand, the same terrain provides concealment so a stealthy approach may be facilitated. In such situations the Mobility DM can be treated as a positive DM to attempts to avoid detection and thereby gain surprise or as a negative DM on attempts to spot the infiltrators. Wise commanders use obstacles that do not hugely impair detection of intruders or build in open zones that must be crossed without cover.

RATING TERRAIN
The twin concepts of mobility impairment and defensive advantage can be used to rate almost any form of terrain. For example, an area of a TL9 city might be considered to be impeded terrain in terms of mobility and sighting, and allows an improvised position to be thrown together quickly in almost any location. It is not necessary to provide specific ratings for every conceivable type of terrain when the situation can be described with these concepts.

CHAPTER-THIRTEEN

DETAILED RESOLUTION

The degree of detail in which a situation is resolved is always up to the referee. An entire mission can be resolved with a quick ECEI check if this is appropriate and a battle can be resolved just as quickly by use of the combat resolution system. At the other end of the scale it is possible to play out an entire ticket using the standard *Traveller* rules, resolving combats on an individual scale and deciding who won by looking at who is left standing and in possession of the objective.

Somewhere in between the two lies the possibility for detailed resolution of operations and missions by expanding parts of the situation and playing them out in closer focus than a simple abstraction but retaining primary interest in the large-scale outcome. As always, the resolution of a situation is subject to referee interpretation; these rules tell the referee what has happened but not necessarily the details. If those matter, they can be extrapolated from the outcome.

Actual combat between two forces is still resolved using the system presented on page 78, and most circumstances can be resolved as an operation using ECEI or a relevant CBAS characteristic. It is always possible for the referee to adjudicate and narrate rather than rolling dice, especially if an event is important to the campaign storyline. Alternatively, many activities can be resolved at a moderate level of detail that allows the Travellers to have multiple mini-adventures or to move back up to full abstract resolution. Most such actions are carried out in support of a mission, in preparation for a battle or after one.

Many of these situations give advantages to a mercenary force that does well and vice versa. It may be that the Travellers want to use some of these rules but only when it is likely to benefit them. The referee is the final arbiter in such matters and there is always the chance of an unpleasant surprise if the enemy turns out to be better prepared than the Travellers thought. Once committed to a resolution in more detail the Travellers must live with the results.

APPROACH AND INFILTRATION

Approaching a target is always a critical moment. Often the approach is straightforward, such as when a strike force forms up in its base and flies at speed to the target in grav vehicles or when a large-scale attack is prepared behind friendly lines. A force making an approach in this manner might be intercepted or engaged with whatever weapons will bear; such things are a fact of life in the mercenary trade. On other

occasions it may be possible to sneak close to the target before attacking. In either case the approach is divided into three zones:

Immediate: The Immediate area around the target is considered to be the zone in which the mercenaries can attack with small arms and move into the target on foot within a few seconds.

Short: The Short area is the zone around the target where foot patrols are likely and where support weapons such as mortars and grenade launchers can attack the target – and vice versa. A sniper or observation team supporting an operation will need to establish itself in the Short area, either undetected or in a situation where it cannot easily be dislodged by the enemy.

Remote: The Remote area is of nebulous size, starting outside support weapon range and extending several kilometres at least. A force in the Remote area can be targeted by artillery and similar long-range weapons located at the target.

It is necessary to pass through the Remote and Short zones to reach the Immediate target area. A combat approach, in which the mercenaries advance to combat and fight their way onto the objective, can be assumed to be part of a combat resolution check under most circumstances. However, there are occasions where the approach is important, such as when a stealthy infiltration of the target is attempted but fails. If a combat approach is required, the attacking force must make a Mobility check. The difficulty of this check is normally Average (8+) for an enemy force with adequate weaponry.

The Effect of this check is applied to the casualty determination roll at the end of the mission and as a DM to combat resolution. A fast approach with good covering fire can reduce casualties and increase the chances of success but there is always the chance enemy defences may be heavier or more alert than expected. If so, the referee can increase the difficulty of the Mobility check. A poorly defended target might have a reduced Mobility check difficulty.

Sometimes the Travellers will want to sneak close to their target before launching the attack. When this is the case, the Infiltration phase of the operation becomes extremely important. Infiltration is normally carried out by either stealth or deception. In some cases this can be very simple. If the enemy has a much lower level of technology available, it is usually possible to use low-flying grav vehicles to insert personnel close to the target area. Military vehicles are normally built with a degree of low-observability in mind and whilst this is not enough to hide a grav APC from sensors of its own Tech Level it may defeat lower-tech equipment.

High-tech mercenary forces can become rather blasé about such operations, becoming used to flying to the target whilst the poor dumb yokels stare at their primitive radar screens and see nothing. However, local forces can still spot stealthy vehicles if they keep a sharp lookout and advanced sensor packages are not all that expensive. Indeed, some mercenary units specialise in installing 'black boxed' sensor and communications equipment and training the locals to use it.

Where stealth is a necessity, small mercenary forces have an advantage over larger ones. The skills of infiltration are little different at TL15 as they are at TL5; only the supporting technology differs. Most infantry units are trained in basic fieldcraft and movement in hostile terrain but there is only so much time for training so skills in this field will be at a low level. A non-specialist unit attempting to infiltrate an enemy position uses its ECEI modifier as normal to determine the level of success. Specialists such as snipers and commandos may gain additional DMs for their expertise. See Book 2, page 13 for details.

Any attempt at stealthy infiltration is resolved using the Infiltration Resolution table. The target area is abstracted as three zones: Remote, Short and Immediate. The latter is where the mercenaries want to be; close enough to their target that the active phase of the mission can be launched without additional movement or preparation. The short region is close enough that the mission can be launched with considerable difficulty, probably requiring the elimination or bypassing of additional guards or emplacements. A force that is detected in the Remote area has completely failed to sneak up on the enemy. If the target installation has artillery or similar long-range weapons they can engage the detected force and aerospace or other mobile assets might be called in to make an intercept. On the plus side it is relatively easy to break off from this point.

A force that simply flies or drives to the target relying on stealthy or low-observable vehicles uses its Tech Level DM, minus the Tech Level DM of the target formation, on the Infiltration Resolution table. The same applies to forces making a vertical envelopment by meteoric assault, with an additional DM-2 resulting from the inevitable signature increase caused by passage through atmosphere or gravitic braking systems. Note that some local forces may have much higher-tech detection equipment than their normal loadout and will use the highest Tech Level DM available.

Forces making a more stealthy approach use their ECEI as a modifier in addition to the opposed Tech Level DMs and may receive additional DMs

Infiltration Resolution

2D+DMs	Detection	Details
0 or less	Detected Early in Remote Region	The force was detected well short of the target but was not aware of this. It can be engaged with heavy weapons. It is quite possible the infiltrating force will be massacred if the enemy has heavy defences. The enemy has time to set up an ambush or a capture attempt at the target zone.
1–3	Detected in Remote Region	The force was detected well short of the target and can be engaged with heavy weapons.
4–6	Detected in Short Region	The force is detected short of the target but can still deploy. It will be engaged by local defences and vehicles may be targeted by heavy weapons. The force will have to fight its way to the target.
7–9	Detected in Immediate Region	The infiltrating force is detected very close to the target, more or less at the intended deployment point. It will have to quietly eliminate whoever detected it or 'go loud' to continue the advance.
10–12	Undetected	The force reaches its start point completely undetected.
13–15	Undetected: Enemy Oblivious	The force reaches its start point completely undetected. The enemy is distracted or completely oblivious of the situation. DM+2 applies to further attempts to resolve actions on the mission until the advantage is lost.
16+	Undetected: Unexpected Opportunity	The force is undetected as above, and in addition the infiltrators gain an unexpected opportunity.

for circumstances or capabilities. Stealthy units have an intrinsic DM to infiltrate an enemy position and additional DMs might be imposed by extremely complacent hostiles or a diversionary operation drawing attention elsewhere. If the Travellers want to create a diversion or distraction they will have to plan this as an operation and commit part of their force or have allies carry it out. A typical diversion will grant the Travellers DM+2 on their infiltration or exfiltration check.

A force that is deliberately moving slowly and carefully gains DM+2 and one moving with extreme care – such as taking 12 hours to crawl 500 metres between enemy patrols – gains DM+4. A force that contains vehicles of any type, even stealthy ones, is subject to DM-2 for small vehicles and DM-4 for larger ones such as grav APCs.

As always, the outcome of an infiltration must be interpreted by the referee. Quick action by the Travellers might be sufficient to salvage a situation that is going south. For example, if upon realising their over-confident approach in grav vehicles has been detected the Travellers abort their mission and streak away from the area they may avoid the worst of the response. A desperate knife throw or snapshot with a suppressed weapon might be enough to silence the guard who has spotted their infiltration. These are moments where an abstracted resolution turns into a mini-adventure.

If the Travellers' plan requires a sniper in position or similar preparatory infiltration, this can be resolved using the same system. An entire operation could be blown by the discovery of an observation post, with the mercenaries having to alter their mission plan to support the infiltration unit or dash onto an alerted objective.

FIGHTING THROUGH TO AN OBJECTIVE

As they approach the target the mercenaries must make an infiltration check. This assumes they make some effort to avoid detection, of course. If they prefer to charge in with appropriate music blasting the raiders are automatically detected in the Remote zone. The enemy will naturally attempt to prevent the mercenaries reaching their target.

Attackers detected in the Remote region will usually be attacked with artillery or aerospace defence weapons depending on whether they are using grav or ground transport. The relevant CBAS characteristic for the target is used in this case, on the Fighting Through table. If the mercenaries are detected in the Short zone they will be attacked with aerospace or short-range ground combat weapons; Combat or Aerospace is used in this case. A force detected in the Immediate zone will

almost certainly face ground combat assets, unless the mercenaries are somehow making the entire raid from an airborne posture. This might happen if they happen to be from a species that can fly or have access to grav belts but it is a strange way to go about attacking a ground installation.

In some cases the mercenaries might be intercepted by ground forces instead of long-range weapons but the process of fighting through to the target is the same in each case. The mercenaries must resolve a phase of combat and obtain a successful result for each zone they pass through on the way to the target – but only if they have been detected. A force attacked with artillery or bombardment weapons cannot inflict meaningful harm upon the launching unit, so a positive outcome on the resolution simply means the attackers were not forced to turn back. Similarly, the goal is not to defeat every intercepting patrol or troublesome machine-gun nest. Instead the mercenaries' success means they brushed aside opposition and pushed on with their mission.

Fighting Through

2D+DMs	Outcome
0 or less	Total Defeat: The attack disintegrates into chaos and must be aborted. The attackers check for casualties with DM-2.
1–3	Defeat: The force is defeated and must fall back to a safe rally point.
3–5	Bogged Down: The attacking force does not manage to advance. It may abort the attack or try to struggle through. If this is attempted, apply DM-1 on casualty determination for each phase the attackers are bogged down.
6–8	Contested Advance. The attacking force pushes through the zone but takes some damage. When casualties for the operation are determined the force suffers DM-1 for each phase of Contested Advance.
9–11	Advance: The force crosses the contested zone without taking undue casualties.
12+	Overrun: The force crosses the contested zone rapidly, driving off intercepting forces or causing the target to lose tracking. If another zone must still be crossed, the mercenaries do so without coming under fire. Apply DM+2 to resolve combat at the target or to determine casualties at the end of the mission.

A force that faces opposition on the way to the target resolves casualties only once, at the end of the mission. Casualties taken on the way in are factored into this in the form of a DM on the resolution check.

EXFILTRATION AND BREAKING OFF

Exfiltration from a mission target poses a different set of problems to infiltration. Usually the enemy will be alerted that something has happened but may also be confused or distracted. A clean exfiltration breaks contact with enemy forces at the earliest opportunity, allowing the unit to leave the area either under its own power or courtesy of a rendezvous with transport assets. A hot exfiltration is more of a problem, usually requiring personnel to board transports whilst fending off pursuit. This is considered to be an example of breaking off from combat; one of the most hazardous activities a mercenary unit can engage in.

Some results from combat resolution require a force to break off; other situations allow a force to break off it is appropriate to do so. A force using Reckless tactics will not break off and one being Aggressive cannot do so during the early phases of a battle. To break off from combat a unit must get far enough away from its enemies they cannot pursue or attack it. This can be a problem for slow-moving forces but in some cases the enemy will not pursue for various reasons.

A successful break-off can use speed or stealth, or movement through terrain the enemy cannot traverse. To break contact by stealth the unit must make a successful Exfiltration check using the Exfiltration Resolution table. The unit's ECEI is used as a DM on this check and stealthy units may have additional DMs. If a stealthy exfiltration fails the unit will have to break off, although this is made much easier if the unit has put some distance between it and the target.

Exfiltration Resolution

2D+DMs	Detection	Details
0 or less	Surprised in Immediate Region	The force is caught unexpectedly by hostiles close to the target zone. An additional DM-4 applies attempts to break off from this point.
1–3	Detected in Immediate Region	The force was detected close to the target and must break off to attempt a hot exfiltration.
4–6	Detected in Short Region	The force is detected some distance from the target. DM +2 applies to its attempts to break off.
7–9	Detected in Remote Region	The force is detected but is far from the target. DM +6 applies to attempts to break off.
10–12	Undetected	The force reaches the exfiltration point without enemy contact.
13+	Perfect Exfiltration	The force reaches its exfiltration point without enemy contact and leaves virtually no clues it has been present. Even a detailed investigation is unlikely to determine who carried out the operation or how.

The referee may grant the exfiltrating force additional DMs for assistance such as a diversionary attack or cover from concealed snipers along the exfil route. This is typically worth DM+1 or +2 but a particularly good plan might grant a larger DM.

To break contact using speed or mobility through difficult terrain, a force will usually give the opposition a reason to slow down, such as a brief counterattack or creating the suspicion of an ambush or minefield. Escape requires a successful Mobility check, which will usually be of Average (8+) difficulty. If the enemy is not mounting an active pursuit (see page 96) the force will take some damage but manage to get clear. The amount of casualties suffered is determined by an additional casualties check with the outcome of the Mobility check as a DM.

SEARCH AND PURSUIT

Often when a target is attacked the enemy will be stunned or satisfied with repulsing the assault. The retiring attackers will be fired upon and a there may be a local pursuit but forces assigned to defend an area will not usually maintain an active pursuit even if they are equipped to do so. An active pursuit occurs when a force intends to maximise the effects of the defeat inflicted upon its enemies by maintaining contact and harassing them to cause further casualties or prevent regrouping. It has been said that in pursuit 'brigades are not necessary; battalions will do' – in other words once a force is retreating in the face of the enemy pressure can be maintained by smaller units. However, this assumes that the enemy is retreating in disorder. A pursuing force that runs into a determined and well-organised rearguard may be in trouble.

A pursuit can only be made if the target force knows it has been attacked and has some idea which way the attackers went. Some acts of sabotage, kidnap and the like might be carried out in such a way the enemy does not realise anything has happened until well after the force has left the area or they might be induced to believe the attack was in fact an accident. If this is the case, no pursuit can be made. In the case where the enemy knows an operation has been carried out but cannot be sure which way the attackers went, a search will be mounted. This is simulated by the exfiltration check above. If the mercenaries are really daring they might even stay close to the enemy base, evade a search and strike again later. A successful Exfiltration check can be used to simulate this gambit; in this case if the force is not detected it will be assumed by the enemy to have left the area when in fact it has gone to ground nearby.

If a force wishes to maintain an active pursuit the enemy formation is assumed to have escaped unless the pursuit succeeds. Rather than checking to break off, the pursuing force must make an Average (8+) Mobility check. The Effect of this Mobility check is used as a DM on the Pursuit Outcome table. This is subject to additional DMs as follows:

If the force was Routed: DM+6
If the force was Defeated: DM+3
If the force chose to retire, such as after a successful raid: DM+0
If the retiring force covered its retreat with delaying forces, mines or a similar gambit: DM-2
If a force is already subject to DMs for a bad defeat, these are not applied to the pursuit but do apply to any renewed combat.

Pursuit Outcome

2D+ DMs	Outcome
0 or less	Disaster: The pursuing force collapses in disorder and loses contact. Determine its casualties from this fiasco in addition to any from the combat that just occurred. The retiring force escapes with no damage.
1–2	Failure: The pursing force loses contact without inflicting any significant casualties.
3–5	Tenuous Contact Maintained: The pursuing force follows its opponent but is unable to bring it to action. Pursuit may be maintained but a cumulative DM-2 applies until either contact is lost, the pursuers choose to break off or the enemy are brought to action.
6–8	Contact Maintained: The pursuers remain in contact but cannot bring their opponents to action. They could guide in air strikes or assist other forces in making an intercept with their knowledge of the enemy position but cannot act directly.
9–11	Harassment: The pursuing force inflicts casualties on the retiring enemy. A cumulative DM+2 applies, possibly reducing or cancelling out earlier Tenuous Contact DMs, until the pursuit is resolved or the enemy accepts action.
12–14	Brought to Action: The pursued force is caught and brought to action. It must fight at least one round of combat before attempting to break off again. Collapse may occur.
15+	Overrun: The pursued force has been caught in a disorganised state. It must fight at least one round of combat before attempting to break off again. Collapse may occur.

If a force is subjected to one or more incidences of harassment during a retreat, casualties for these are determined at the end of the pursuit. If additional combat was fought, DM-1 applies to the force's check to determine casualties for each incidence of harassment. If no additional combat was fought the force checks for casualties with DM+0 if it was only harassed once and a cumulative DM-1 for each incidence thereafter.

If a force chooses to stand and fight it must resolve a new combat with DM-2. If brought to action this is DM–4, and if overrun the DM is –8. A new attempt to break off can be made after any phase of this new combat, subject to these DMs. This combat is also subject to DMs from a previous defeat.

A force that is brought to action or overrun may collapse or be unable to fight effectively. A Morale check is required, with DM-4 if the force was Overrun. If this check is failed the force suffers the negative Effect as an additional DM on combat resolution and is likely to be heavily defeated. If the Effect of this check is –6 or more the force collapses.

A collapsed force is considered Routed before combat begins and suffers casualties from the defeat with DM-6. A collapsed force is dispersed and will take some time to regroup. In the meantime pursuit is ended.

A pursued force might be rescued by another unit intercepting the pursuers or setting up an ambush. It might even be possible to feign rout in order to draw the enemy into an ambush but this is one of the hardest operations to carry out effectively.

RAIDS AND SABOTAGE

Small mercenary units are often hired as raiders rather than warfighters. A raid might be undertaken for various reasons; to obtain intelligence, to cause damage or disable a capability, or as a diversion from other activities. Raids are generally undertaken by forces too small to take and keep possession of the target area but with sufficient firepower to eliminate opposition and possibly dominate the target area for a short time. A similar situation exists where a small force attempts to take and hold an objective long enough for reinforcements to arrive or for other forces to do what is necessary elsewhere. Examples include a small force dropped from orbit directly onto the downport with orders to hold it until larger forces arrive by more conventional means or a raid on the planetary aerospace defence headquarters intended to disrupt operations long enough for an invasion fleet to start landing troops.

A raid will typically involve an approach or infiltration and the plan should include provision for the raiders to be relieved or extracted. Once the force has reached its objective, the raid can be resolved as an adventure or using the normal combat resolution if the referee desires. However, a raid is a slightly different situation to a stand-up fight and can be resolved using the table below.

Raid resolution assumes an installation, settlement or camp of some kind is being attacked and that there are some kind of security procedures in place. If the raid is against a major fortification, it provides much less benefit to the defenders than if the mercenaries were staging a major attack. Bases and fortifications are discussed on page 110 but once inside the fortification the mercenaries (or those raiding them) will have nullified most of the advantages offered by fortification.

A force fighting its way to a fortified target is not engaging the fortification itself, so its combat DM is not applied. Likewise the full DM is not used once the raiding force is at the target, because it is inside the fortification. The fortification still offers some advantages to its security force.

Once the raiding force has reached its target the mission can be carried out. If this is an attack, it is resolved as a normal combat, with a successful result indicating the mission objective has been achieved. This must be interpreted by the referee but typically means something controlled from the target has been put out of action for a time or that the mercenaries are temporarily in control of the area. They may have to decide whether to retire or try to cling on if a counterattack appears but that will be a separate action.

In some cases, such as quiet sabotage, the mercenaries will prefer to plant charges or steal documents then slip away. This is resolved using the Raid Outcome table, with the raiders' ECEI as a positive DM and that of the security force at the target as a negative DM. Additional DMs may also apply, such as that provided by a fortification.

Raid Outcome

2D + DMs	Outcome
0 or less	**Fiasco:** The raiding force completely fails to meet its objectives and stumbles into heavier-than-expected security. The force must attempt to break off and make a hit exfiltration, with DM-4 applying to the attempt.
1–3	**Mission Failure:** The raiding force is prevented from carrying out its intentions and must either defeat the local security detachment in a straight-up fight or break off without anything to show for it.
3–5	**Noisy Success:** The raiding force accomplishes what it came for, more or less, but becomes entangled in a confused fight with the security detail at the target. Some personnel may have been captured already. The raiders must decide whether to fight to free them or break off with the enemy in contact.
6–8	**Detection:** The raiding force accomplishes what it came for but is detected as it prepares to withdraw. Attempts to make a hot exfiltration are resolved as per Exfiltration on page 94.
9–11	**Late Detection:** The raiding force accomplishes what it came for but is detected as it withdraws. Attempts to make a hot exfiltration are resolved as per Exfiltration on page 96, but with DM+2.
12–14	**No Detection:** The raiding force accomplishes what it came for without 'going loud' and slips away before the security force realises anything has happened.
15+	**Excellent Success:** The raiders were not detected. If appropriate, the enemy does not even know anything has happened yet – they are unaware documents have been taken or equipment sabotaged. If this cannot be the case, the raiders encounter an unexpected opportunity.

TIMING OF ENGAGEMENTS

The timing of an engagement can be critical, especially if the Travellers are doing something else at the same time or if coordination with another force is required. If the mercenaries are relying on a local force to sweep aside opposition so they can sweep through to the main target, the timing will be critical. If the mercenaries arrive and find the enemy force still in position or engaged with the locals they may have to join that battle or dash through taking casualties on the way. Either option will result in disorganisation of the force and possible dislocation of the plan.

The timing of phases is based on the size of the mercenaries' force and can be used to match up engagements. For example, the mercenaries might time their movement to coincide with phase two of the clearing force's attack. If the clearing attack only takes one or two phases and is successful the way is open or opening as the mercenaries arrive. If not, the Travellers will have to deal with this situation and their timings for the main attack will be disrupted. This might result in the enemy being on high alert or abandoning an untenable position. Reinforcements may be on the way or whatever other effects the referee deems necessary. What is certain is that the situation will be different than if the clearing force did its job at the right time.

The referee should be mindful of the fact that battles of annihilation are extremely rare. It can happen, especially when overwhelmingly powerful weaponry is used or one side is fanatical, that forces are wiped out before they can flee or surrender. This is an unusual situation but some clients seem to expect it to happen as a matter of course. A client may demand to know why the target was not completely eliminated or want an explanation for

the mercenaries' retreat when they clearly should have fought to the last. Similarly, the Travellers may expect much higher casualties – among their opponents at least – than is realistic.

In reality, most combat takes the form of snapshots at fleeting targets or suppressing fire that expends a lot of ammunition without hitting anyone. This does not mean it is wasted; a hail of fire will keep the enemy from manoeuvring or cost them casualties if they do and may convince hostiles to pull back from their positions. It is difficult to aim coolly and carefully with bullets striking your cover. Prodigious ammunition expenditure is part and parcel of winning a battle without taking heavy casualties. Precision weapons such as guided missiles or snipers do alter the shots-fired-to-casualties ratio but on the whole a mercenary unit can expect to expend a lot of ammunition for every casualty inflicted.

If the Travellers want to expend less ammunition they can put their troops on a reduced supply budget and insist on aimed fire rather than suppressing an area but this will reduce effectiveness. Shorter-range engagements also tend to produce more casualties for the same amount of ammunition and effort. Short range also makes it more difficult for one side to break off if the fight is not going well or increases casualties if they do. Even then, what normally happens is a series of fleeting engagements between units on the move, fire coming from somewhere that cannot be located and dashes between cover until one side – or sometimes both – decides they cannot win and starts to pull back. Sometimes this happens piecemeal as part of the losing-the-battle process, with parts of a force going to ground rather than supporting their fellows or beginning to retreat leaving more aggressive personnel in the lurch.

Not all of these early leavers are deliberate deserters. Some become confused and get lost, blundering out of the combat zone or becoming accidental prisoners. Others are shocked and scared or genuinely think the battle is lost. Some may actually be misled by the enemy as part of a deliberate psychological operation to get them to surrender. Often victory goes not to the most impressive fighting force but to those who keep trying to win the longest. An individual with little information can only react to what is going on immediately around them, and may not know that the battle is all but won. A unit's ECEI is an indicator of the factors that inspire individuals and small groups to fight on in such confused circumstances. Often a battle hinges on the decision by a handful of soldiers to stick to their position, confident that their comrades will not abandon them or to go forward in the expectation that support will be provided when it is needed.

Most such situations can be dealt with using the normal combat resolution system but sometimes the Travellers may want to do something that will produce a particular result. For example, they may wish to carry out a rapid movement into the enemy rear to allow retreating forces to be ambushed or trapped, or a deception to make the enemy think they are surrounded. Such actions should be resolved as a separate combat if appropriate and should be resolved at a time best suited to drama and keeping the Travellers guessing.

Example

The Travellers are assaulting a village held by the enemy, hoping to drive them back. The only escape route is a narrow bridge over a deep ravine, which has been secured by a small detachment. The Travellers hope to leverage a victory at the village into a strategic success by trapping the enemy. If they assault the bridge first, the defenders will know their escape route has been compromised and will alter their battle plan accordingly. They may fight more determinedly in the village, making victory more costly for the Travellers, or make a breakout attempt ahead of the attack on the village. If the Travellers are happy for this to happen they can plan the attack accordingly. If not, they will have to delay the bridge assault until the village attack is already underway and the enemy is committed. The bridge attack will not be resolved until the outcome of the fight in the village is determined. That may mean the Travellers will not know if the bridge is held by their people or the enemy, adding to the tension of the situation.

The referee resolves the village attack and, sure enough, the enemy decides to retreat after taking casualties. With a small rearguard holding out for now, they board their vehicles and race for the bridge to escape. Now it is necessary to know if the Travellers' attack was successful or not. If it was repelled, the enemy will be able to use the bridge and might even capture some of the mercenaries. If it was completely successful the mercenaries will be in defensive positions ready to ambush the escaping hostiles. An inconclusive result might mean the mercenaries are hotly engaged with the bridge defenders when the lead elements of the retreating force arrive. The resulting multi-layered sandwich battle could be very costly for either or both sides.

A secondary operation of this sort can be used to improve the results of a successful battle, as can an active pursuit of a defeated force. The situation above should be resolved as a new combat, with the fleeing hostiles disorganised and possibly trapped. Some elements may break though and escape if they defeat the mercenary detachment at the bridge or a large segment of the force

may be trapped. A fight to the last is likely only if the hostiles expect to be mistreated upon surrender; more likely the fleeing force will put up a confused and patchy defence then collapse.

This situation could be abstracted as a typical battle, with the referee ruling that any form of defeat on the part of the trapped force must be treated as a strategic defeat. This is in keeping with the old adage of giving battle on deadly ground – where the effects of a defeat are magnified. Such a ruling makes sense in any situation where a force cannot retreat. However, a force that knows it cannot escape will generally fight harder and should be given DM+1 to +3 to its Combat characteristic. The worse the fate thought to be awaiting captives – whether this is real or the result of propaganda – the harder the force will fight.

Other gambits can be resolved using a DM to or a modified outcome from the normal combat rules. A force that is defeated but cannot retreat must surrender or be annihilated. Which happens is usually up to the winning side. In such a situation it is reasonable to consider a tactical victory to be a strategic one and for casualties to be almost total. Most of these will be prisoners, which may present the mercenaries with a new problem.

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

A mercenary contract will often be accompanied by a set of rules of engagement and most units have their own rules in place. The majority of mercenary tickets take place in a situation that stops short of open warfare and operations may well be carried out in close proximity to people who are just trying to live their lives. For example, if the Travellers are hired to deal with an insurgency or provide security for aid convoys in a disaster zone they may be involved in heavy combat but at the same time must avoid causing civilian casualties or an incident that makes matters worse for the client.

Some mercenary operations fall under what is popularly termed 'black ops'. Such operations are deniable and nobody is going to admit responsibility for what is almost certainly an illegal operation. Most mercenaries dislike such missions because they are likely to be abandoned or disavowed if captured and the client may try to silence them whether or not the operation is successful. On the other hand, if the operation officially never happened and nobody will talk about it, the mercenaries are free to pretty much do whatever they please. There are still good reasons for staying low-key and avoiding entanglements with bystanders but a client willing to pay for the illegal and deniable destruction of a rival's business headquarters cannot realistically object if the operation was not conducted with regard to avoiding collateral damage.

Other mercenary operations are conducted in a legal grey area. For example, the client is a government that considers what they are doing to be justified and sanctions it but the target does not recognise this authority. One example of this is a situation where a government has decided to unilaterally nationalise the local assets of an offworld corporation. The removal of security personnel by force is legal from the point of view of the government but the corporation would consider it a violation of its territory and an unwarranted attack on its employees.

The legal wrangling over such matters can go on for years, so wise mercenaries require a 'hold harmless' clause that essentially says the mercenary unit will not be subject to legal or civil penalties if the operation is later 'found to be ill-judged' on the part of the client. How much protection these clauses offer depends greatly on the power of the client and of course they do not prevent the victims from attempting to gain redress by other methods. Mercenary commanders routinely search for connections between a prospective client and a former opponent, just in case the ticket is not what it seems.

Even when everything is above board, the mercenaries will be bound by rules of engagement and the laws of war as recognised in the area of operations. Typically this means the unit will face penalties for carrying out or failing to prevent atrocities or breaches of the rules. These are often convoluted or strict to the point where the force is unable to act freely. For example, rules of engagement on a security ticket might permit the use of force only in self-defence or to protect specific people or assets. It may be that the Travellers are forbidden to fire at a sniper who is shooting over their positions into a refugee camp nearby.

Generally speaking, the local Law Level will dictate how tight (some would say absurd) the rules of engagement may be. A common one is the 'self-defence only' clause attached to many security and peacekeeping operations. Whilst often well-meant this sometimes means a unit cannot respond to a request for help from an allied position just down the road or may act only in very specific circumstances. This can lead to difficult choices for the mercenaries and may be useful in creating plot elements.

For example, local insurgents have discovered the unit's rules of engagement and are exploiting the situation. The mercenaries spot a suspicious-looking individual

but are not permitted to do anything until a clear threat emerges. When this individual suddenly produces a grenade and starts to throw it, the mercenaries are permitted to shoot but even aiming weapons at him is forbidden until the grenade and the intent to use it are positively identified. As soon as the grenade leaves the insurgent's hand, he is 'no longer a threat' and can simply saunter away. Anyone firing at him would be committing a breach of the rules of engagement. It might be possible to pursue and apprehend the attacker but it may be that the mercenaries are not empowered to do so or cannot leave their positions. Ridiculous as this situation may sound, it is a fact of life for those working security or peacekeeping tickets.

Occasionally, factions inside the client's organisation will use this sort of thing to hamper the mercenaries or create an incident they can exploit. More commonly the rules will be well-intentioned but needlessly restrictive. The mercenaries' attempts to get around the rules or to deal with the fallout from a breech can be an interesting episode or even the focus of an adventure. It may be that the Travellers end up colluding with the client to find a way to bypass the client's own rules of engagement in a way that nobody can criticise. Being a mercenary is not just about bullets and shell fragments; sometimes a good lawyer is more useful than body armour.

A unit's legal skills are generally indicated by its CEI. In small units this is just one more thing for the commander or perhaps a subordinate to deal with. 'Legal, Logistics and Intelligence' is a common remit for the second-in-command of a small unit, although larger formations usually employ a legal staff either as part of their military headquarters or as a civilian back-at-base detachment.

Legal challenges can be used by the referee as a change of pace or a plot element. Perhaps a supporting unit suddenly pulls out or moves to a self-defence-only posture in the middle of a critical operation. The Travellers discover it is responding to a legal gambit and have to deal with a changed situation. This sort of thing is rare in an all-out war but when operating in a 'war-like situation' an enemy will use any means to neutralise opposing assets. Of course, the Travellers have the same options.

THE FOG OF WAR

It is rare that a commander has perfectly detailed information available and apparently clear information can sometimes be wildly wrong. A detailed intelligence picture can be built up over time but there is always the possibility of a mistake or deliberate deception. This is true both on a large and small scale, although elaborate deception operations take time to put into effect.

Information is one of the most important commodities in warfare and mercenary intelligence operatives are rarely short of work. Specialist units are not uncommon, since intelligence work requires a depth of knowledge and experience many planetary armed forces are lacking. Intelligence specialist mercenaries are usually one of three types, with some units having all three and others specialising in one area. Cyber-intelligence operatives specialise in hacking enemy systems and obtaining information or disrupting operations remotely and often do not look 'military' in the slightest. Some intelligence analysts are similar in appearance, although those associated with a military unit usually conform to its regulations. Field operatives are usually capable of passing themselves off as nondescript individuals and will avoid extremes of dress and appearance, although some are rather direct in their methods and resemble other combat troops.

The Travellers' unit may contain intelligence personnel – possibly just a lone, overworked intelligence officer – or the campaign might revolve around the actions of a force of 'intelligence commandos'. Units of this sort specialise in recovering information, documents and sometimes personnel from the immediate aftermath of a combat, or in making raids to get information. A mercenary intelligence commando unit will usually have both field and analysis people to allow it to provide a full service.

Well-equipped mercenary forces can often provide their employers with useful intelligence even if this is not their main function. For example, the communications equipment owned by a TL12 mercenary unit might be entirely capable of penetrating the local TL7 communications net. At the very least it will be possible to triangulate signal sources and analyse the types of emissions to get an idea of enemy dispositions and force types. The converse is also possible. If the enemy has a reasonable signals intelligence capability this can be exploited to deceive their analysts. With the right equipment a platoon-sized mercenary force can impersonate a TL6 tank division well enough to deceive an unwary enemy.

The Travellers will be able to make their lives a bit safer and their operations more effective by exploiting the hidden benefits their equipment and experience can offer. A high-tech mercenary unit has advantages over most local forces in terms of soldier-for-soldier fighting power but the possibilities go far beyond that. Those who exploit every gram of superiority tend to have a longer and more lucrative career than those who rely on their high-tech guns and body armour.

Combat tends to be confused and fluid. It is not always possible to be sure where fire is coming from, nor that certain the figures glimpsed passing the end of the street are hostiles. The ability to share information rapidly or to create blockouts that prevent artillery weapons firing on prohibited or friendly targets can save not only lives but also lawsuits. Not all mercenaries care about collateral damage but those who operate recklessly tend to find their potential client base shrinks once word gets out. Units that are precise and careful to avoid friendly and neutral casualties tend to benefit from not having a reputation as reckless thugs.

Any system can be penetrated, no matter how secure it appears to be. Some mercenary forces use personal transponders and weapons modified to recognise them. In theory such a weapon will not function if a friendly transponder is in the line of fire. However, this feature can be exploited by hackers or clever enemies who steal transponders or spoof their signals. Thus it is often necessary to rely on the skills and restraint of well-trained and experienced personnel. This is one reason why mercenaries are sometimes hired in preference to local forces, who might be over-reliant on technological aids or prone to being compromised when they are exploited. Local forces might simply be too inexperienced after years of peace to be able to handle a complex situation and if the mercenaries make mistakes the client can distance themselves from the unit and perhaps pass the blame to them.

This can generate Missions. The mercenaries might be sent to capture some enemy hardware so it can be examined and any loopholes in the programming exploited. This in turn may link back into legal matters, as the mercenaries are tasked with provoking an incident in which the enemy's reliance on their automated friend-or-foe system will be exploited. It might be that a major conflict could turn on such a pivot, with a critical mercenary unit taken out of the enemy arsenal by legal proceedings resulting from tampering with its equipment.

PSYOPS AND DECEPTION

Psychological operations (psyops) are an age-old form of warfare. They could be used in the longer term to make a battle unnecessary or in an immediate sense to alter its outcome. Some psyops are based upon deception, often by making the enemy think a region is about to be attacked in overwhelming force or that resistance will result in terrible consequences. For example, the Travellers might 'allow' the enemy to learn they are using a variant plasma gun, which produces huge amounts of radiation when fired. Troops who would be willing to fight bravely against conventional weapons may be unnerved by the prospect.

Sometimes psychological operations are based upon demonstrated truths or a clever misrepresentation of the situation. For example, the mercenaries might fire shells containing leaflets or simply make an announcement on the datanet that at a certain time an enemy position will be annihilated. This is unlikely to be heeded but if the mercenaries can make it happen – say by saturating the position with missiles or artillery fire – the next time they make such an announcement they may find the position abandoned shortly before the appointed time. This allows the Travellers to fulfil their mission with minimal bloodshed which will satisfy most clients.

Psychological operations will rarely unnerve an enemy to the point of complete collapse but they can be used to gain an advantage. The psyop should be planned by the Travellers then resolved as a mission, using the unit's Support DM. Success will give the Travellers an

advantage, such as weakening the enemy's resolve or in the case of exceptional success causing desertions. Normally an advantage will amount to DM+1 or at most +2 to resolve an ensuing combat. If desertions are caused the amount can be determine by a casualties roll made on 1D+6, with the mercenaries Support DM applied negatively. These 'casualties' are subject to the usual rough 1/3 split; a third will be back in position within a day or so, a third will be back in a few days and a third are gone for good.

Psychological operations will rarely win a war but can be used to wear down the enemy or obtain a specific result. A psyop might be planned to force the enemy to take a particular action such as moving additional heavy weapons to a sector the Travellers do not intend to attack or releasing some prisoners taken in an earlier action. It might also be possible to convince enemy leaders to defect or withdraw support for their faction but an operation of this level would normally be played out at least in part as an Adventure.

Predictability and Standard Practice

In theory, a military force operating in the field should prepare defensive positions every time it stops moving. This is a lot of work and even the most diligent of soldiers will tire of it in short order. Less disciplined or weary units are unlikely to trouble themselves to any great degree and a habit of digging in after each move can actually be counterproductive. Someone who has just finished digging a foxhole and finding materials to make overhead cover may be reluctant to abandon it. Wasted effort of this sort will be accepted for a time but eventually morale will suffer.

Thus the Travellers should not be allowed to claim their troops always dig in and prepare fields of fire after every move and likewise they will sometimes catch enemy forces with their vehicles parked in vulnerable spots and personnel lounging about in the open. A unit's attention to defensive preparedness is usually indicated by ECEI. The Effect of an Average (8+) ECEI check can be used to determine how diligently personnel have set up their defences. Even if they are in a major fortress some personnel will be out in the open, hatches will be unsecured or equipment left in a vulnerable place. If some circumstance occurs that results in casualties, such as the sudden arrival of a time-on-target artillery attack or undetected hostile forces opening fire, the Effect of this check could be used as a modifier on the casualties chart or to determine if the enemy achieved surprise.

Professional soldiers have an eye for cover and concealment. Even if they have not made defensive preparations most will have recognised potential places to take cover and perhaps taken note of likely enemy positions. There will usually be some cover nearby, although an attack from an unexpected direction could lead to personnel taking cover on the wrong side of an obstruction, at least at first. Likewise, standard drills can be extremely useful but can also be exploited. If the Travellers are able to study their enemies' tactics they may be able to provoke a predictable response.

One example of this is to set up a 'mechanical ambush' with anti-personnel mines on one side of a road and open fire from the other. The force under attack will naturally move to take cover, only to find that as troops scramble into obvious places of cover they are faced with anti-personnel mines. Alternatively the Travellers might position a small detachment where it can fire on a likely stopping point for an enemy convoy, knowing that troops will take cover behind vehicles – with their backs to the Travellers' main force.

Astute Travellers might want to set up conditions whereby they can observe the enemy's habits and standard drills. Some forces find this too much effort, and sometimes there will be no time or opportunity, but even then there are quick and easy sources of information. If the Travellers know or can find out where the local commanders trained or which doctrine they follow, it is possible to make predictions about what engaged forces will do. It is unusual for smaller militaries to formulate their own doctrine; most follow one of the major powers with a few local variations. Indeed, in many cases advisors from a larger power will assist in 'training the trainers' of a smaller one's military.

If the Travellers have access to the tactics manuals of their opponent or the works they are based upon, they can usually make predictions or modify tactics to exploit the limitations of local forces. This can be done on a long or short timetable. If the Travellers undertake some good analysis work and successfully resolve an Intelligence Event they may be granted a DM either to reduce casualties or improve combat resolution. This will require time and planning, and may be a Mission or an Adventure for those involved. The payoff might be worth it over a lengthy ticket but for a quick strike mission there is unlikely to be time.

Predictions can be made in specific ways as well, sometimes in the face of the enemy. A force laying an ambush or expecting an encounter will always make assumptions about what the enemy force will do but in some cases specific predictions may be highly useful. For example, an enemy force may be prone to political showing-off rather than maximising security and effectiveness. The arrival of a new force in the theatre of war is likely to be about demonstrating power in a manner that can be exploited in propaganda vids. The

mercenaries might therefore conclude that the new arrivals might conduct a parade or at least park their vehicles in an impressive formation rather than placing them under cover. If the Travellers go to the trouble of looking for opportunities like this they may be able to formulate a war-winning strategy based around a sudden attack or artillery barrage against a unit that thinks it is operating under peacetime conditions. This sort of search for a flaw or opportunity might be scripted by the referee as part of the ticket or earned by the Travellers through good planning, inventive ideas and an intelligence operation.

INTERACTIONS WITH THE LOCALS

All units impose some measure of security on their immediate surroundings, whether that be their base or area of operations. Not all do it particularly effectively, however. A unit's ECEI can be used to indicate the effectiveness of its security and also the professionalism with which local people are treated. Mercenary units typically want as little interaction as possible for security reasons and also to avoid potential entanglements but it is rarely possible to create a complete exclusion zone without being heavy-handed. Typically this means forcibly removing or excluding the local population from certain areas, which can lead to resentment and the sort of interaction the mercenaries do not want.

The alternative is to maintain security as well as possible but to interact with the local population in a professional or even positive manner. If the mercenaries are operating out of local military bases or government facilities the matter can be left to the locals. However, the way they act might not sit well with the mercenaries or the security arrangements might be lacking. This can have implications for the mercenaries in the field if they are being observed in their preparations or might even lead to the base being infiltrated and attacked.

The success of security arrangements – whether the mercenaries benefit from them or are trying to bypass them – is as usual based on ECEI, although there might be variations depending on circumstances. A corrupt local officer, suborned by the opposition, might create gaps in the mercenaries' security setup to allow infiltrators access. Wise mercenaries monitor the situation as best they can, though they may not have personnel to spare to handle their own security.

ECEI can also be used to determine how well general interactions with the local population tend to go. A low ECEI indicates a weary or sloppy unit that may be contemptuous of local people or heavy-handed towards them. A mercenary force that is present for a short time can usually get away with this but on a security or similar longer-term deployment there is time for the mercenaries' conduct to influence the course of their ticket. Mercenaries who are patient and polite with the locals might win friends and are certainly less likely to develop new enemies. This might pay off with some information quietly slipped to the mercenaries during a routine patrol or a request for help from someone who is being coerced into acting against the mercenary force. On the other hand, if the mercenaries' treatment of the locals is unpleasant they are unlikely to get help even if they demand it.

The Travellers can try to deliberately foster good relations with the local population if they want to, although this comes at the price of increased contact and perhaps vulnerability. Attempts to improve relations might be quite passive, such as insisting that members of the unit are polite and non-threatening or could be active. In regions where infrastructure has been damaged by war or insurgency a mercenary unit may be able to provide medical assistance or help fix broken amenities which will generate goodwill – but also exposes unit members to ambush or abduction.

Some clients will object to the mercenaries spending time (and therefore the client's money) doing something other than fighting the enemy but many tickets cannot be brought to a successful conclusion by force of arms alone. If the local population can be won over they will cease supporting an insurgency or harbouring enemy personnel, which will enable the situation to be brought under control. One term for this sort of situation is 'three-block war', in which a mercenary unit may be engaged in an intense firefight, be providing disaster relief and be promoting security and a return to normal life – all at the same time and all within the space of three city blocks.

Most operations carried out in this sort of environment can be modelled using the standard DEI or ECEI resolution system, with Opportunities and Incidents reflecting the nature of the conflict. Sometimes something will happen – good or bad – which catches the mercenaries by surprise but is the result of their ongoing efforts or lack of them. For example, a badly beaten man is dumped at the gates of the mercenaries' compound along with a rifle that appears to have been broken over his head. Investigation suggests that this is an insurgent sniper who was on his way to a vantage point from which he intended to attack the mercenaries. Clearly the local population were opposed to this, perhaps as a result of the mercenaries' fair and civil treatment of them. It is often the case in insurgencies that most people just want to get back to a normal life. Those that continue to prosecute the conflict are

prolonging the suffering of a population that has wearied of it. The Travellers can benefit from this, although it will work against them if they alienate the population.

Travellers who want to try to build trust and goodwill should plan Missions and Operations in support of this and if successful they will see a gradual swing towards their side. This should not happen overnight; one dice roll should never dictate the course of a campaign or ticket. Getting involved in a situation at this level generates a more immersive story and also creates new problems for the Travellers to solve. This sort of thing is desirable if the campaign is not to become an endless series of abstracted firefights.

HEARTS AND MINDS

Mercenaries are focused on getting the job done, which usually means capturing or destroying something, or teaching someone else how to do that. Wider considerations such as winning over the local population can usually be left to the client... unless what the mercenaries have been hired to do is part of a project to do that. 'Hearts and minds' operations are particularly important on some security tickets, where good relations with the local population can reduce problems or produce helpful results.

There are many ways to win hearts and minds, and many more ways to alienate people. A unit's ECEI is an indicator of how well it follows its own policies, whatever they may be. If the Travellers demonstrate contempt for the local population the referee is justified in assuming the unit's attitude is similar. On the other hand, being overly 'soft with the locals' can hamper operations or even the unit's security.

Commanders who are concerned about relations tend to have strict rules about honourable conduct towards the local population, such as insisting that personnel pay fairly for goods and treat people with respect. A low ECEI suggests such policies are not followed even if they exist and even in a well-disciplined unit it may be that relations with the locals come a long way second to the unit getting what it needs. In some cases bullying and plundering the local population is seen as part of the job and the Travellers might have difficulty enforcing a more friendly policy even if they want one.

In general, relations can get worse quickly but improve only very slowly. The gradual shift in relations is modelled by the Relations Indicator for whatever group the referee is focusing on. In a complex situation the referee may have to keep track of multiple indicators but commonly there will only be one or two significant groups in an area of operations.

Every 2D days the Travellers may check to see if relations have changed. This is an Average (8+) ECEI check, which may be subject to additional DMs at the referee's discretion. A unit that is trying to play fair by the locals and has some good policies in place can be granted DM+1 or at most +2, whilst one that clearly does not care all that much will suffer DM-1 or –2. A unit that is openly contemptuous, brutal or rapacious towards the locals will suffer greater DMs on this check. If the check is passed, the Relations Indicator is increased by +1. If the check is failed, it is decreased by –1.

When an incident occurs that might change relations more quickly, an additional check can be made. This might be triggered by the mercenaries sending a detachment to help the locals get their power back on or driving off some bandits that have little to do with the mission. Such activities may weary the unit's personnel and will expose them to additional danger, so Travellers who act like heavily armed do-gooders will eventually run into trouble. Likewise, particularly egregious incidents of mistreatment or tragedies such as the shooting of a local person who was thought to be an armed insurgent – or the faking of such an incident by the enemy – will trigger a check.

In the case of a potentially positive situation, succeeding in the check increases the Relations Indicator by +1; failing it will usually produce no result. The same is true of a potentially negative situation – failing the check will reduce the Relations Indicator but passing it will not improve relations.

Relations Indicator

Relations Indicator	Situation
0 or less	**Active Opposition:** The locals hate the mercenaries and may be in open opposition to them. Attacks on vulnerable personnel or destruction of equipment are commonplace and any mercenaries that fall into local hands are certain to be brutally mistreated.
1-2	**Hatred:** The locals hate the mercenaries and will openly refuse to deal with them or carry out acts of passive resistance. Some locals will join or assist the enemy and it will take little to trigger an uprising or similar attack. Minor acts of aggression against the mercenaries are common and anyone captured or abducted is likely to be harmed.
3-4	**Resentment:** The locals resent the mercenaries and will shun them or passively make their work harder. Information is hard to obtain and often distorted.
5-6	**Dislike:** The locals openly dislike the mercenaries but mostly try to ignore them. Information will not be volunteered but might be bought for an inflated price. Cooperation is likewise difficult to obtain since anyone collaborating with the mercenaries faces hostility from their neighbours.
7-8	**Wary:** The local population is, perhaps wisely, wary of the mercenaries and will try to keep contact to a minimum. This is the default level of interaction in most situations, unless something has already improved or soured relations.
9-10	**Neutral:** The local population is not unduly concerned about the presence of the mercenaries and will interact with them like any other strangers. That might mean attempting to fleece them in the market or steal their equipment if the local population is so inclined but this is done out of desire for profit rather than malice.
11-12	**Passively Friendly:** The locals are well-disposed towards the mercenaries and might assist them in a passive manner. Information might be volunteered if there is an expectation of reward and the mercenaries might be considered 'good friends to have' by some people.
13-14	**Actively Friendly:** The mercenaries have won the trust and friendship of at least a segment of the population. Information may well be volunteered with no expectation of reward and the mercenaries might be asked to help or advise purely because they are respected rather than for any sort of gain.
15+	**Adulation:** The mercenaries are admired and well-liked by the majority of the population, who will go out of their way to help and even protect them.

The Relations Indicator can be used to produce a DM just like a Traveller's characteristics, applied to attempts to negotiate, to determine if someone will agree to help or in any other situation where the locals' attitude influences their actions.

NEGOTIATING AND COERCION

Mercenaries may be able to rely on specialist business negotiators when determining the fine details of their contracts but there are many situations in the field where negotiation is useful. These include bargaining with local populations for supplies as well as trying to persuade enemies to surrender rather than fight on. Some situations can be resolved by a simple skill check by the relevant officer but often negotiations can drag on for a while with points clarified or amended. Battles have been won on the field and then lost at the negotiating table and mercenaries are well aware of this.

Major issues should not be resolved with a single skill check, especially if the Travellers are trying to obtain something outrageous. Fifteen minutes of tense negotiation might well be enough to persuade a band of gunmen to release the corporate officials and come out with their hands up but persuading a defeated nation to pledge everlasting allegiance to a new overlord is a more complex business.

Often, in large-scale negotiations, there are multiple issues that have to be agreed. Each one moves the negotiation closer to a result but any or all of them could require actions to be taken. For example, the mercenaries have inflicted a sharp defeat on the forces of their client's enemy and the client wants them to negotiate a modified border that removes a security threat. Ceding territory, even a little, is not something a nation does lightly. The former enemy is willing to consider the move but wants something in return – in this case the release of some of its personnel who have been captured by 'irregulars' who joined the fighting

on the border. For a suitable fee the mercenaries agree to make this happen and are given a free hand to do so. It then turns out the irregulars want something from the government in return for the prisoners and the mercenaries find themselves with a choice between acting as negotiators between the irregulars and the government, or just cutting through the whole knot and using force to free former enemies from semi-official former allies.

A unit's negotiating ability can be abstracted using its Support characteristic or a Traveller can use their own skills. The table below indicates how well or badly the negotiation is going and is subject to DMs for the situation. If the Travellers are negotiating from a position of strength – either real or perceived – the referee may award DM+1 or +2. In an extreme case, such as where a small enemy force is totally surrounded and enormously outgunned, the DM can be increased to a maximum of +4. Likewise, DMs can be negative if the Travellers are in a poor position. Even when making a generous offer from a position of dominance it is still possible to fail; the enemy leader's personal guard might decide to die with honour is a suicidal charge rather than turn them over. However, this is unusual; in most cases an agreement of some kind can be made.

Negotiations can spark additional missions and adventures. Indeed, the mercenaries might be hired after a war to assist in resolving a few troublesome clauses. This might mean getting the negotiators what they want or taking away bargaining chips the opposition has retained or perhaps giving them an incentive to make a deal by a demonstration of what might happen if they do not. Alternatively, the mercenaries might end up launching a covert mission to find out what the opponents are hiding or if they have weaknesses that can be exploited.

The Negotiation Resolution table can be used in a short or long-term negotiation. The Situation Indicator normally begins at a value of 7, assuming a fair deal is on the table, although the referee may choose to set the starting position higher or lower depending on circumstances. A history of bad faith on one side might result in a very low Situation Indicator, requiring some strenuous diplomatic work. On the other hand a generous deal might predispose the opposition towards taking it.

When a proposal or amendment is offered the Travellers may make a Support, Diplomat or Persuade check, which will usually be of Average (8+) difficulty. The Effect of this check is applied to the Situation Indicator and the outcome applied. As usual the referee must interpret the results; if a negotiation is going well then suddenly collapses there will be a reason and the reason might spawn new adventures.

Where a large negotiation is in progress, days or even weeks might pass between proposals or shifts in attitude. One side might be deliberately stalling to gain a better position or just to stave off capitulation. Mercenaries can find themselves with new troubles in a such a situation, with enemies taking advantage of stalled negotiations to shift their positions or reinforce threatened units. They might find themselves facing an enemy unit that has sort-of-surrendered and therefore cannot be legally attacked but which is digging in and strengthening its position. Perhaps the negotiations will be broken off when preparations are complete, allowing conflict to be resumed on more favourable terms?

Example

The mercenaries have a band of gunmen surrounded and trapped but the gunmen claim to have hostages. The mercenaries want to negotiate a release and surrender, with guarantees of fair treatment. Unfortunately the mercenaries' client does not have a good reputation for treatment of captives, so the referee decides the Situation Indicator will begin at 4.

The mercenaries' negotiator does her best, with a combined skill and characteristic DM+3, but is reduced by –2 for the attitude of the gunmen. The negotiator rolls a 9, modified to 10, for a total Effect +2 on her Persuade check. This brings the Situation Indicator up to 6; the negotiations are stalled but the gunmen are not so negative as they were.

Before the negotiator can try again something must change, at least a little. She cannot simply keep repeating the same offer. In this case, something has changed – the mercenaries have performed a little covert reconnaissance and learned that the gunmen have several seriously wounded comrades. The negotiator adds an offer of treatment for the wounded by the mercenaries' own personnel and urges their surrender. She gets no additional DM for this offer but it does allow a renewed attempt at negotiation. A roll of 8 on the Persuade check is modified to 11 for Effect +3 and this is added to the Situation Indicator. With a value of 9 the gunmen are being persuaded but have not yet agreed.

At this point the negotiator offers a new and persuasive argument: 'If you do not agree in 15 minutes we will break off negotiations. At some point after that we will storm the building and kill all of you'. The referee decides this is worth DM+2 but as an ultimatum it is a risky gambit. If her terms are rejected the negotiator has to either go back on her word, which will weaken her position and cause a negative DM to be applied or she must do as she says.

Negotiation Resolution

Situation Indicator + Effect	Situation
0 or less	Rejection: The proposal is rejected. If the Travellers want to re-present it they will have to make some meaningful change to the situation or the deal.
1–3	Hostility: The opposition is hostile to the deal on the table and moving towards complete rejection. DM-4 applies to Diplomat or Persuade checks.
4–5	Quibbles: The opposition continually quibbles over minor points, demands clarification of everything and rephrases what has been said in a way that changes its meaning. DM-2 applies to Diplomat or Persuade checks.
6–7	Stalled: There is little agreement or movement towards one.
8–9	Progressing: The opposition is coming around to the idea of acceptance. DM+1 applies to Diplomat or Persuade checks.
10–11	Good Progress: Many obstacles or objections have been overcome. DM+2 applies to Diplomat or Persuade checks.
12–14	Partial Acceptance: The opposition are willing to accept a deal with just a few concessions. No DM applies to Diplomat or Persuade checks to push for full acceptance instead.
15+	Complete Acceptance: The opposition accepts the deal as presented, though perhaps without enthusiasm.

The Persuade check is subject to the negotiator's own DM+3, +1 because the talks were Progressing and +2 for the final ultimatum which seems convincing. A roll of 6 on the Persuade check is modified to 12, with Effect +4. This brings the Situation Indicator to 13 – partial acceptance. The gunmen ask for a few minor concessions such as the mercenaries ensuring their families know where they are and who they surrendered to and these are agreed. A few minutes later the gunmen begin releasing the hostages and bringing out their wounded.

TIREDNESS, FATIGUE AND R&R

Anyone embarking on any sort of military career can expect to become sleep-deprived at some point. Tiredness and sleep-debt are a way of life, and career mercenaries learn how to stave off the effects in order to remain alert on guard and also how to squeeze in a few minutes here and there. Personnel who can manage to get even just a little sleep – two to four hours in every 24 – can continue to function in this manner for an extended period. Those who get little or none decline rapidly in effectiveness.

In situations where it is important the referee must keep track of how long a unit has gone without proper rest. 'Proper rest' in this context means at least two hours sleep in every 24 and preferably more than that. Most civilians would consider four hours' uninterrupted sleep to be inadequate; mercenaries in the field are more likely to describe it as paradise.

Days without proper rest are cumulative, and are not remedied by getting two to four hours of rest. To remove the effects of one day without proper rest it is necessary to spend 12 hours resting. Some of this time is spent sleeping but 'rest' in this context includes such luxuries as a shower, clean clothes and half-decent food plus time to read mail, watch a vid and drink beer, and just generally relax. In reality, the recovery time from a long period without adequate rest increases exponentially after the first few days but these mechanics will serve for a mercenary campaign.

Cumulative Fatigue

Days Without Proper Rest	Effect
2	Extreme weariness, DM-2 on all tasks.
4	Severely impaired decision-making; DM-4 on all tasks.
6	Even simple tasks are difficult, personnel are prone to bursts of temper at the slightest provocation. DM-8 on all tasks.
8	Personnel are 'militarily useless' and cannot follow even simple instructions. DM-12 to any task that can be attempted.
10+	Personnel are virtually incapable of taking action or making decisions. Mental health issues are likely in the long term.

In an immediately life-threatening situation, personnel will act according to their training but badly. Negative DMs are halved for anyone carrying out a physical action in combat but anything requiring problem-solving or decision-making is subject to the full DM. Thus a mercenary will shoot at attackers with a halved negative DM but will suffer the full DM if they try to come up with a battle plan or even just use their radio to call for help.

In addition to the immediate effects of minimal rest, mercenaries operating in the field may become fatigued over time. This is more than mere tiredness; a fatigued unit becomes increasingly ineffective and makes poor decisions without necessarily realising exhaustion is the root cause. Good discipline and morale will keep fatigue at bay for a time but everyone is susceptible to the effects of too long in the field. These begin with as listlessness, argumentativeness and general inattention to details and gradually develops into internal bickering and feuds between personnel, over-focus on stupidly small details and ultimately mutiny.

Fatigue can be used as a plot device, providing an explanation for why a supposedly secure area was left unattended or how a member of the unit was suborned by the enemy. It can also be a source of pressure on the Travellers to get the job done rather than waiting until they have every possible advantage. If the referee uses fatigue effectively, it will become another factor in the decisions made by the Travellers. Eventually they will stop trying to do the most effective thing possible to get the biggest DM on resolution rolls and start making decisions like real military commanders. This can have implications for the security of the unit's base and ultimately the success of its operations.

Fatigue is tracked for the mercenary unit as a whole and can also be tracked for key individuals or sub-units. It is tracked using the Company Fatigue Index, which is named to closely fit with the similar mechanic used in the *Naval Campaigns Sourcebook* and does not necessarily imply a company-sized unit. Separate Fatigue Indexes may be used if the referee decides to do so, for smaller units and individuals. Fatigue Index starts at 0 and may increase at intervals during a ticket. This will not usually happen during the first few weeks of a deployment but undisciplined personnel can become bored and restless within days. Fatigue Index can also be applied to non-combatant personnel associated with the unit such as a client the mercenaries are providing security for. This can cause them to become increasingly impatient or unwilling to comply with instructions. Again this may help drive an adventure, forcing the Travellers to accept a quick-and-dirty solution rather than waiting for weeks until the perfect moment arrives.

After the initial interval shown on the Fatigue table and again each time the indicated interval has passed, the Fatigue Index automatically increases by +1. At the same time, the referee should determine if the individual (or crew as a whole) has become Fatigued with a 2D check.

Fatigue

Unit Type/Circumstance	Interval
Undisciplined (for example, a mob of armed civilians rallied to deal with a local crisis)	1D Days
Typical (for example, an inexperienced but properly trained military unit)	2D Days
Disciplined (for example, an experienced mercenary force)	3D Days
Highly Disciplined (for example, an elite military unit)	4D Days
Poor conditions (for example, serving in a desert with indicate food and shelter)	–1D Days
Good Conditions (for example generous supplies, regular R&R and a safe rear area to relax in)	+1D Days
Known Situation (for example if the mercenaries knew this would be a long deployment and made preparations)	+1D Days
Obvious Need (for example, the mercenaries are supporting friends rather than a mere client, and the situation obviously requires patience)	+2D Days
Frequent combat or danger	Treat each 1D as D3
Intense combat or danger	Treat each 1D as D3-1 and increase Fatigue Index by +2 after each interval

On average, Fatigue Index will increase by +1 every 11–12 days on deployment for a typical mercenary unit. The referee may impose modifiers on the Fatigue check to avoid becoming fatigued, depending upon circumstances. Food in particular is important to morale, along with the ability to blow off some steam from time-to-time. Being confined to a fortified camp for long periods also takes its toll, though having some kind or recreation facility will help.

Becoming Fatigued

Any person or unit who has a Fatigue Index of one or more may become Fatigued in the course of a ticket. A check is made every time Fatigue Index increases; if the result is equal to or greater than the Fatigue Index, the subject has not become fatigued. For individuals, their highest level of any military skill (such as Gun Combat, Tactics or a technical skill connected with their role in the unit) can be used as a DM to avoid becoming Fatigued. When checking for the unit as a whole, ECEI is used. If the check is passed, there is no effect.

If the check is failed the unit (or individual) has become Fatigued. This goes far beyond mere tiredness; it has been described as a malaise of the soul. Personnel are irritable, disaffected and often listless. A Traveller or unit suffering from Fatigue suffers a Bane to all skill checks until the situation is remedied. In addition, Fatigue Index continues to rise at the prescribed intervals and each time a Fatigue check is made any member of the affected unit who is already Fatigued must make an END check that begins at Simple (2+) and rises one level in difficulty on each subsequent occasion.

A failed END check means that the individual has become dangerously incompetent. All skill checks are increased one level of difficulty (e.g. Average becomes Difficult). Failing the END check with Effect –6 or worse means the individual has suffered a breakdown. They may become aggressive towards colleagues, sufficiently depressed that they cannot perform their duties or otherwise a menace to the unit and the mission.

It would be unusual for a whole force to suffer a mass breakdown. Instead, the referee should pick a small number of individuals who suffer serious effects, with the number increasing at each interval until the situation is remedied.

A typical mercenary unit has a fatigue interval of 11–12 days, which can be increased by various measures. On average, the unit will become Fatigued after 8 intervals, or 88–96 days in the field. This assumes routine patrolling or garrison duty, with relatively little danger. If the same force is seeing frequent brushes with the enemy the interval is reduced to around six days – 3D3 rather than 3D. In a situation where the force is on the front trench line of a major war, regularly being pounded by the enemy's artillery, the interval is 3D3–3 days or three days on average and Fatigue Index increases by +2 after each interval. It is possible for a unit to become Fatigued after just a few hours in such conditions.

Offsetting Fatigue

Fatigue Index can be reduced by various means. For individuals, a short period of rest and recuperation will reduce the Fatigue Index by –1. This might be something as basic as a 12-hour pass to go bar-hopping, with the occasional longer stand-down. Whole-unit Fatigue Index can be reduced in this manner if there is a rotation of personnel through R&R. This is standard practice on deployments of more than a couple of weeks, although it can be a problem when operating in an unfriendly area. On most longer deployments Fatigue Index will not be a factor, providing the Travellers are willing to accept the slight security risk inherent in allowing their personnel out of their base area. Fatigue will only become a factor if the unit is spending a long period in the field, such as on a counter-insurgency or security deployment.

If the Travellers want to make a special effort to defatigue their personnel they can do so in a great variety of ways. Sport competitions, formal dinners, award ceremonies or just an extended stand-down rotated through the unit can all help personnel refocus and return to duty with new energy. One of the Travellers must make a successful Average (8+) check on a relevant skill to present a suitable activity and can be creative in how this is done. For example if the Travellers decide to hold a multi-ballsports tournament with teams competing in events drawn at random, this might fall under Admin or a professional sport skill. If the check is successful, Fatigue Index is reduced by –1. However, the same method cannot be immediately used again so the next attempt to defatigue the unit will need to be something different.

Sometimes a call to arms is sufficient to refocus the crew. The unit's commander may use Leadership to get the crew to refocus. This might take the form of a rousing speech or the imposition of harsh discipline, depending on the character of the commander. A Difficult (10+) Leadership check reduces Fatigue Index by –1D but can be attempted only once per ticket.

A short break of at least three days in a suitable recreation facility or a friendly city will reduce Fatigue Index by –1D but only for unit members who get to enjoy it. If one platoon is left on guard at base when the rest go to the rear, its members do not benefit and may become resentful. The end result will be some personnel being less Fatigued and others more so, for an overall zero result – and there is the chance that unfair treatment will reduce MOR. The answer is to rotate the entire formation through R&R, although this means the sub-units still at the sharp end may be forced to fill in for their missing comrades.

A good break of at least a week doing something other than normal duty reduces Fatigue Index to zero, but again only for those who can enjoy it. Rotating the entire unit through enough downtime to refresh them is normally done at the end of a ticket. The Travellers will have to be quite creative if they want to build a large-scale vacation into their mission planning, although some tickets include such an event as a perk – usually in return for a low hiring fee.

A break of this sort 'cures' all fatigue effects except a breakdown. An individual who is in such a mess that they cannot perform their duties will not recover over the course of a week's holiday. Instead, they will improve to some extent but retain quirks and potentially dangerous habits. These might include sloppiness about weapons safety and other potentially lethal problems or just a general lack of care about whatever task the individual is assigned.

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

CFS is a recognised mental illness and one that military doctors are careful to monitor. Small mercenary units may not have the facilities to do so, however, and at the same time they tend to operate in a more intense environment as they move from one conflict zone to another. Some personnel are more prone to fatigue than others and some do not recover as quickly when rest or diversion is available. A CFS sufferer may try to 'keep it together' and do their job, and may manage to conceal their symptoms or go undiagnosed by an inattentive medical staff.

CFS is grounds for removal from a position of authority, so military officers are sensitive to accusations they are suffering from excess fatigue. Those who have not been spotted in time may 'crack' at a dangerous moment, adding to the Travellers' troubles. The breakdown may be graphic, with a unit member stealing a vehicle and careering away on a high-speed joyride to… anywhere but here. Far more often it is insidious, causing the sufferer to freeze rather than acting or to make decisions in a dangerously risk-averse manner.

An inventive referee can use CFS in a number of ways, even if it is not actually present. For example, the client appoints a liaison officer who once held high rank and clearly knows his stuff. There are rumours that he was induced to resign after developing chronic CFS and that he remains both unstable and resentful of those will holding combat commands.

Bases and Fortifications

Mercenary forces typically operate out of local facilities. These may be a pre-existing military base or major installation such as the downport. If so, facilities are rarely a problem. Whilst not an ideal situation, operating out of a port or even an industrial transportation terminal is nothing new for most mercenary units. There are no penalties for operating out of a temporary base of this sort providing the unit is well supplied and not working out of such a facility on a permanent basis.

In the field, a unit often has to make do with what it can improvise or requisition. It is possible to create a temporary forward operating base by moving the local population out of a village or part of a town and taking over the buildings. This can cause resentment but often there is little alternative. Mercenaries can live in tents and portable shelters and these are usually relatively comfortable. A TL9+ tent village has basic air conditioning, cooking facilities, freshers and even the capability to do laundry. The ability to obtain clean, dry clothes is regularly cited as one of the factors that keeps mercenaries from wanting to desert.

Whilst tents and lightweight shelters are easily transportable, they do not offer much protection from enemy action and little from thievery. This is a problem almost everywhere mercenaries might operate. Sometimes it is members of the mercenary unit doing the stealing but more commonly it is local people or allied troops helping themselves to the mercenaries' supplies and even weapons.

Much can be done to make a tent-base more secure. Prefabricated fence sections or wire entanglements can create an exclusion zone, which can be monitored by inexpensive cameras and alarm systems. Sandbags are cheap enough and dirt is free. The laborious task of filling the bags is made easy by the purchase of a dedicated digger/filler robot. These devices are high on the must-have list for most mercenary units.

Most mercenary units practice 'camp drill' over and over until siting and setting up a camp can be completed within a few minutes of coming to a halt. Fences and wire can be in place in an hour, with sandbag walls going up as fast as soldiers can stack them. This is day-to-day life for a mercenary in the field and not generally considered particularly onerous unless the unit is making frivolous movements. One possible downside to this relative ease of creating a temporary base is that personnel come to expect it. Most will tolerate sleeping rough if necessary but 'bivouacking' means something quite different to a TL10 mercenary than it does to a TL2 soldier.

Improvised, Prepared and Strong positions can be put together with the unit's own resources but sometimes it is necessary to construct a more substantial defensive installation. Once the mercenaries start wanting concrete bunkers and vehicle-proof obstacles special equipment is required. It is possible to make do with civilian construction equipment but specialist engineering vehicles make the work so much quicker.

As a rule of thumb, times indicate how long it takes for a unit of a given size to build a position for itself. This time is halved if the position faces only in one direction. Civilian construction equipment allows Constructed, Fortress and Citadel level buildings to be produced as shown on the Fortification Construction Times table. Without at least this level of equipment it will be near-impossible to create such a structure. Specialist engineering units halve the time required but still require suitable equipment which may have to be requisitioned. An engineering unit equipped with fortification-building gear halves the time again but such formations are rare and expensive to maintain.

This assumes a Dumb fortification consisting only of basic structures and features; concrete-lined obstacle ditches and weapon emplacements, solid bunkers with no lighting or amenities other than firing slits. If a Powered fortification is required the time to build it is not greatly increased if prefabricated wiring and plumbing packages are available. If these have to be constructed from locally available items the work will take up to five times as long. Powered fortifications have electrically operated weapon traverse, lights for internal use and powerful spotlights to illuminate intruders but little in the way of electronics. A Smart fortification has an integrated electrical and electronic system with good data-sharing between sensors and weapon systems, a central plotting and coordination chamber and a high level of habitability.

Dumb fortifications do not grant a DM to deal with electronic warfare attacks or to detect intruders, as they have no electrical or electronic systems at all. A Powered base grants no DM against electronic warfare attacks but checks to detect intruders receive DM+2 due to cleared areas, lights and so forth. A Smart base grants DM+2 against electronic warfare and DM+4 to detect intruders. It may also have automated defensive systems.

Dumb, Powered and Smart status does not affect the ability of the fortification to resist damage and protect those within. Those characteristics, and the DM granted in combat resolution, are defined by the level of intricacy and overbuilding that went into its construction, rated as Constructed, Fortress and Citadel. The capacity of a fortification is based on the number of infantry platoons that can make use of it.

Constructed, Fortress and Citadel level bases are described on page 89. A Field Base is a lightly fortified installation intended primarily to serve as a logistics and rest hub for the force. It incorporates some solid defensive structures but makes much use of simple field expedients such as earth trenches and sandbags.

Fortification Construction Times

Type	Sophistication	Time (Days)
Field Base (+6)	Dumb	2
Field Base (+6)	Powered	3
Field Base (+6)	Smart	4
Constructed (+8)	Dumb	4
Constructed (+8)	Powered	5
Constructed (+8)	Smart	6
Fortress (+10)	Dumb	8
Fortress (+10)	Powered	10
Fortress (+10)	Smart	12
Citadel (+12)	Dumb	14
Citadel (+12)	Powered	16
Citadel (+12)	Smart	18

Time is per platoon the installation can house. Halve the construction time for specialist engineering units and halve it again if the unit has fortress-building equipment. A company-sized fortification takes four times as long to build as a platoon-sized one and a battalion-sized fortification requires 16 times as long as one intended to house a platoon. Thus if a company-sized engineering unit with specialist fortress-building equipment is engaged to construct a Smart Citadel sized fortification for a battalion, it will need to produce 16 platoon-equivalents of fortification at 18 days each, halved for being an engineering unit and halved again for having fortress-building equipment. The installation will not be fully ready for 72 days. A civilian contractor could probably do it more quickly and would normally be hired for such a large project. However, impressive fortification complexes can be put together by mercenary units at need and it may be cheaper to hire mercenary builders who can defend themselves rather than civilian contractors and a mercenary unit to defend them.

Dealing With Fortifications

It is unlikely a mercenary unit will be tasked with the capture of an entire large fortified area in the course of a campaign. Far more commonly a fortification will be a plot element. For example, the Travellers might be tasked with making a commando strike to disable aerospace defence weapons sited in a citadel-type fortified area.

Impressive as such fortifications are, they are geared up to defeat large-scale attacks rather than infiltration and raids. The enormous artillery weapons guarding the approaches to such a citadel become irrelevant once the commandos enter the fort itself. If they are detected in the killing zone, that is a different story – more than likely a short one.

In the case where the Travellers must launch a raid on a major fortification of this sort, the fortification may provide DMs to the chance of detecting the Travellers as they approach. The garrison's ECEI can be used for both detection and combat checks or its Support and Combat characterises may be more appropriate. If the Travellers are detected they may have to choose between aborting the mission and fighting through to the objective. Once on the objective the situation can be resolved using large-scale combat resolution if the referee so chooses. If so, the fortification provides half its normal defensive DM. For example, a mercenary formation attacking a Fortress would suffer DM-5 for combat within the fortress, as opposed to the usual DM-10 if the referee wanted to abstract the whole assault.

A fortified area can be reduced by bombardment. If the fortification has artillery weapons that can reach the mercenaries' position then combat resolution is required each phase and there is a possibility the mercenaries' weapons will be put out of action or they may even be forced to withdraw. If the fortification cannot shoot back it must simply endure and hope a counterattack can drive off its tormentors.

Bombarding a fortification takes time. Each phase of artillery bombardment, the attackers must pass an Average (8+) check using the unit's Artillery characteristic and Tech Level DM. The relative size of the forces provides a DM as usual – this is +/–4 for every level of size difference and in addition the fortification's defensive DM is applied. Obviously, a mercenary force with a single battery of TL7 howitzers is not going to break down a battalion-sized Fortress. A single battery is a platoon-equivalent, so the Travellers would need to produce a result of 8+ on 2D plus their Artillery and Tech Level DM, with DM-10 for the fortress and an additional DM-8 because its size is two levels greater than the artillery unit available.

On the other hand, a battalion-sized TL12 heavy artillery unit has a much better prospect. With no DM for relative size and DM+2 for Tech Level, this formation's Artillery DM is+ 3. It needs 8+, rolling with a net DM-5. This is attainable, although it may take several phases to achieve. Each success reduces the fortification's defensive DM by –1, until it is little more than a pile of rubble offering no defensive bonus to the defenders. The typical phase length for a battalion-sized unit is 2D hours (see page 13), so the attackers can attempt to weaken the fortification on average every seven hours. As its defensive DM comes down the fort will be wrecked more quickly.

If the Travellers choose to do more than simply pound away, the referee may grant them additional DMs or reward mission success with damage to a fortification. For example, an intelligence coup might produce detailed plans of the fortification, which grant a positive DM on attempts to strike its weak points. Alternatively, the Travellers could launch a raid to blow up part of the fort, resulting in a reduction to its defensive DM. As always, those who just roll the dice can use the rules as presented but Travellers who create adventures for themselves should be rewarded by the referee. Success is never automatic but clever Travellers should be able to find a way around most problems.

Finding solutions to difficult situations is what a mercenary campaign is all about. It may be that the destruction of a powerful fortress blocking the approaches to an enemy's capital is a critical moment in the campaign… but what can a mere 120-soldier infantry company do about it? They could sit about lamenting the lack of fortress-busting superweapons or they could make a plan and get on with working towards victory. After all, a complex series of raids, infiltrations and finally an assault on the main command bunker is a much better story than 'we waited a few weeks for the heavy artillery to come up and they blasted the fort apart'! A key element of mercenary campaigns is that clients hire mercenaries to do what local forces cannot. Figuring out how to make that happen is part of the bargain.